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EDIN DZEKO
Europe's new star

INTER WONDERLAND
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PLUS
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Enzo Bearzot

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February 2011

A NEW YEAR and plenty to look forward to in 2011. On the pitch, the Copa America provides the international highlight, while at club level all eyes will be on London, with Wembley the venue for May's Champions League Final.

Off the pitch, the growing crisis of confidence in Sepp Blatter's leadership of FIFA will be a continual theme.

It's worth pointing out that we are 11 years away from the 2022 World Cup in – I'm still disbelieving as I write this – Qatar. So we have avoided any discussion on whether the tournament should be moved from the summer to the winter. There will be ample time for such discussions in the coming months and years, not least because the clubs have yet to flex their muscles on the subject. When they do, we will be able to engage in proper debate – and FIFA will realise what a fight it has on its hands.

Meantime, there will be plenty of unexpected, off-the-cuff ideas from Blatter to contend with. The latest – an "anti-corruption committee" – already appears to have bitten the dust. But that should not discourage debate on corruption within the game. *World Soccer* has long warned of the corrupting influences that exist with FIFA and the wider footballing world – be they World Cup votes, drugs or match fixing – and I hope that 2011 is the year in which the wider footballing community takes up the challenge of seeking greater transparency from those in positions of influence.

We also have some exciting new plans for *World Soccer* which we hope to unveil in the coming months. More on that next time.

GAVIN HAMILTON, Editor
gavin_hamilton@ipcmedia.com

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...IN PICTURES

The global game caught on camera

Wheel of fortune...a fan of African club TP Mazembe, complete with unusual headgear, cheers his team to victory against Internacional of Brazil in the Club World Cup semi-final

Wolfsburg wallies...fans of struggling Bundesliga club show their displeasure with coach Steve McClaren, dubbed "the wally with the brolly" during his stewardship of the England side

Forlorn Forlan...in rainy Leverkusen, Atletico Madrid's Diego Forlan dreams of sunnier climes as the reigning champions crash out of the Europa League

It's good to talc...an Indonesian supporter pours talcum powder over his head during the Final of the AFF Cup against Malaysia in Jakarta

Inter mission...Julio Cesar and the Internazionale defence keep Seongnam Ilhwa's attack at bay during the Club World Cup in Abu Dhabi

Brian Glanville

...on Sepp Blatter the comedian... Beckham's dubious lifetime achievement award...Hodgson's problems at Liverpool...and memories of Avi Cohen and Enzo Bearzot

SO NOW WE KNOW, the lunatics really have taken over the asylum. Sepp Blatter has reassured us, if that be remotely the word, that FIFA is setting up an anti-corruption committee "to police FIFA". A committee, which he promises us without a brace of shame or satire, to "strengthen our credibility and give us a new image in terms of transparency. I will take care of it personally [now there's a reassurance!] to ensure there is no corruption at FIFA."

So who, apart from his lilywhite self, will he put on this committee?

Jack Warner, the ineffable CONCACAF king, arch manipulator of Trinidad & Tobago and all those World Cup tickets? One of the three greedy FIFA figures who, as that *Panorama* documentary told us – with no apparent reaction, not least from Blatter and FIFA – pocketed millions of pounds in a succession of scandals?

And what of the chief executive of FIFA, Jerome Valcke?

It wasn't so long ago that, in a New York court, as we well know, both he and CONCACAF'S Chuck Blazer, Warner's henchman, were branded liars when they attempted to prise away the World Cup rights of Mastercard in favour of Visa. Valcke returned to Zurich, was suspended by FIFA, did brief penance, then quickly re-emerged as top banana, under Blatter.

Way back in Las Vegas in 1993, at the FIFA Congress which preceded the 1994 World Cup and which any rational organisation would have surely held in New York, that irrepressible comedian Robin Williams leaped up on the dais to make the World Cup draw, greeting Blatter: "Wonderful to meet you after feeling you all these years!"

Next day, an American sports columnist wrote that Blatter plainly had a future as a straight man. Now I'd suggest he surely has one as a comedian himself.

Trust me...Blatter

Iconic...Beckham

"Cohen's only Liverpool goal won a game against Aston Villa and the championship with it"

BBC SHOULD surely never stand for "Bird Brained Cretins", yet it was tempting to think so when David Beckham was given his lifetime achievement award.

For what, you wondered, and why? Then, thinking again, it might be that the award was deeply cynical, with Beckham's lifetime achievement being to punch so much above his limited weight, making a fortune and becoming what has been curiously called "iconic."

Thanks to the benighted Fabio Capello, he has acquired a string of cheap England caps for brief substitute performances. In the 1998 World Cup, in France, he petulantly got himself sent off against Argentina, condemning the remaining 10 men to fight on through 120 minutes – though goodness knows he didn't deserve the vile abuse he got from young toughs at the subsequent European finals. In the 2002 World Cup, though admittedly still carrying an injury, he jumped out of the way of the advancing Ronaldinho, thereby facilitating Brazil's equalising goal.

As for penalties, he has both scored them and embarrassingly missed them for England. He has beyond doubt, a wonderful right foot, which can perform small miracles, but as a right winger, as we know so well, he hasn't the pace or the skills to do what genuine wingers do. So it goes.

WITH deep respect, may I ask my fellow football writers to beware of the phrase "begging the question", though they are certainly not alone in misusing it. Fellows, it doesn't mean raising, eliciting or posing the question; it means that something is assumed to be true which hasn't been proved. Pedantic? Me?

One more complaint. We now never have commentaries as such, either on television or radio: they are more like conversations. Time and again, the actual commentator is interrupted by what on American TV is known as "the colour man". While the game goes on, and especially when it's a radio commentary, you want to know what's happening; instead, you get the summariser burbling away and preventing your doing so. It didn't happen in the radio days of that famed pioneer Raymond Glendenning, nor in the TV days of Kenneth Wolstenholme, double DFC mosquito pilot in the war. Why should it now?

NICE work if you can get it. Leaving Liverpool after an unhappy season last summer, Rafa Benitez, for reasons somewhat obscure to me, pocketed the consolation of £4.5million, even though I was led to believe he resigned rather than being sacked.

Then, when he was appointed, surprisingly, by Internazionale, he lasted a few months before being ejected, with a consoling £2.5m and many sentimental scousers wanting

Renowned...Houllier (left) and Hodgson

him back at Anfield. But why? What has been trumpeted as his greatest achievement, victory in the Istanbul European Cup Final against Milan, was surely achieved despite him, rather than because of him, his erroneous tactics enabling Kaka to run riot in the first half, when Liverpool went 3-0 down. Dietmar Hamann came on to subdue Kaka in the second half and the music radically changed.

Was Roy Hodgson ill-advised to quit Fulham, where he had done so well, for a team arguably in tatters? Things under his aegis went radically wrong, but surely the miserably erratic form of what should have been his star player, Fernando Torres, would have undermined any manager?

Hodgson has an outstanding record at club and international level. The greatest mistake he made was surely to go to Anfield at all. At Aston Villa, another manager of renown, Gerard Houllier has looked the ghost of the manager which he himself was at Anfield. Turning the light of his countenance away from one player after another has done nothing for the team and the club's morale, even if, in each case, there may have been some logic involved.

AS Ally McCoist observed, recalling Israeli Avi Cohen's time with Rangers, how sad it was to know of his death, at just 54, after a motorcycle accident in Tel Aviv. Though Cohen played only 24 games for Liverpool in his two years at Anfield, just 18 of them in the league, it is clear he endeared himself to such stalwarts of a famous team as Alan Hansen, Kenny Dalglish and Phil Thompson for his charm and geniality.

His only goal for the club won them a vital game against Aston Villa and the championship with it. Less happy was what happened in 1980 in a match which I reported, at Southampton. It was the day of Yom Kippur, a fast day, the most sacred in the Jewish calendar, but Cohen played – and had the mortification of giving away a soft goal in a 2-2 draw, with an under-hit back pass, intended for keeper Ray Clemence, but snapped up by Phil Boyer. Shades of the German expression, "God punishes all small sinners immediately."

Meanwhile, Avi Cohen's son, Tamir continues to play for Bolton Wanderers.

THE death at the age of 83 of Enzo Bearzot has deprived Italian football of one of its most illustrious and, let us emphasise the word, honest, figures. For not only did Bearzot, against all the odds, win the World Cup with Italy in Spain in 1982, he stood out against the serpentine hostility of the notorious Italo Allodi. How could he work, Bearzot plaintively demanded, "with a Brutus at my back?" To which Allodi, inexplicably put in charge of Italy's coaching and training centre at Coverciano, responded with unusual wit: "If I am Brutus, then he must think he's Caesar."

Nothing could have been further from the truth. I once described Bearzot as "a large dark man of almost Red Indian looks and an international half-back, he was a passionate moralist who hated much of what Italian football had become and was anxious to wean it away from negativity."

Born in the north east of Italy, he was a student of classics at school and destined, it seemed, to be a doctor. However, he skipped his final exams to play football – and went on to represent a series of clubs, among them Inter and Torino – to the disappointment of his father who, he said, later became his fan "but a silent fan".

Generally a shrewd tactician, he erred now and then. When Italy played France in the 1986 World Cup at Mexico City's Olympic Stadium, Bearzot decided to man mark the effervescent Michel Platini with Giuseppe Baresi. It didn't work and Italy were knocked out. But nothing could detract from his success in Spain. **L**

Illustrious and honest...Bearzot

GOALS
WE'D LIKE TO SEE AGAIN...

Overhead...Zahavi

1 Eran Zahavi, Hapoel Tel Aviv v Lyon
Perfectly executed overhead kick

2 Rafael Garcia, Rampla Juniors v Nacional
First-time shot from inside his own half that hits the net without bouncing

3 Lionel Messi, Barcelona v Real Sociedad
Combines with Dani Alves for three one-twos before coolly scoring

Cool...Messi

4 Juan Manuel Martinez, Velez Sarsfield v Racing Club
Runs from his own half and beats five players to score

Take five...Martinez

5 Victor, Cartagena v Las Palmas
Volley that drops from high in the air and totally deceives the goalkeeper

6 Edinson Cavani, Napoli v Lecce
Starts the move in his own half, skips two tackles, checks back and scores in the top corner

AND ONE THAT SHOULD HAVE GONE IN...

Emilson Cribari, Napoli v Utrecht
The Napoli defender manages to hit the post with a diving header from less than a yard away from the goal line

Ducking and diving...Cribari

To see clips of these goals, visit www.worldsoccer.com

NUMBERS GAME

8,811
days Alex Ferguson had been in charge of Manchester United to create a new record for the club

7
teams that have been top of Ligue 1 in France so far this season

58
goals in 54 Barcelona appearances by Lionel Messi in 2010

838
passes completed by Barcelona against Real Sociedad – the highest number recorded since start of the Opta statistics

40
clubs that received payments from FIFA as compensation for their players taking part in the 2010 World Cup

$40m
total paid out to clubs by FIFA

$1,600
paid to clubs per player, per day by FIFA during the World Cup

$866,267
paid out to Barcelona by FIFA – the largest amount paid to any one club during the 2010 World Cup

REPORTS we couldn't make up

One more to go...Estonia celebrate against Serbia

L ALMOST THE COMPLETE SET

Estonia are seeking a friendly match against France in order to set a new European record. Since their independence from the USSR in 1992, the Estonians have played against 51 other European nations.

They played Serbia in a Euro 2012 qualifier in October, leaving France as the only European team they have yet to play.

L NEW LOW IN ISTANBUL

Relations between bitter Istanbul rivals Galatasaray and Fenerbahce sank to new depths after Galatasaray fans attacked 13 youth-team players during an under-17 match.

The attacks took place during half-time of a match at Galatasaray's training complex. As the players headed to the dressing room, Gala fans ran onto the pitch.

One player was left with a broken nose and 12 others required medical attention at a local hospital.

"It's embarrassing for sport to see such an attack toward our players in front of their parents," said Fenerbahce Under-17 coach Engin Kabas. "It was half-time and the Galatasaray fans called the players to the stands, then they jumped onto the pitch and attacked them.

"There was not a single security guard there."

L A NICE LITTLE URNER

Robbie Fowler, no stranger to controversial celebrations, took the opportunity to taunt his Perth Glory team-mates over England's Ashes victory in Australia by parading with a replica version of the famous cricket trophy before an A-League game.

Howzat...Fowler

RUMOURS we'd like to believe

L Not on the best of terms with Wolfsburg coach Steve McClaren, Italian centre-back Andrea Barzagli wants out and, according to *Gazzetta dello Sport*, Juventus are in pole position to take him back to his native land. If Juve fail to land him, they may turn to Liverpool's unhappy Danish defender Daniel Agger.

Impressive...Sakho

L With Gonzalo Higuain out injured, *El Mundo Deportivo* are running the story that Real Madrid boss Jose Mourinho wants Internazionale striker Samuel Eto'o to fill the gap. The Cameroonian began his European career at Real but made little impact before joining Mallorca, Barcelona and Inter.

L Sources in the French capital believe Paris Saint-Germain's impressive young stopper Mamadou Sakho is moving towards a parting of the ways with his club. Like so many talented French pros, he sees the upper echelons of the Premier League as the promised land.

Less pressure...Lukaku

L The word in Brussels is that young Anderlecht striker Romelu Lukaku will be leaving the club this summer. But rather than move to Real Madrid, Internazionale or Chelsea, he and his entourage feel he would be better served by a move to a less pressurised continental destination such as Lyon.

Paul Gardner

Academic research explodes the penalty shoot-out myth

CURSES, CURSES! This is something I should have thought of ages ago. I'm not happy at being upstaged by a couple of academics, but there we are. So, congratulations to professors Ignacio Palacios-Huerta and Jose Apesteguia for coming up with some very nifty stats on the benighted penalty shoot-out.

Palacios-Huerta is a professor at the London School of Economics – which already sounds wrong – and, with Apesteguia, he has been investigating "psychological pressure in competitive environments". For their research, the penalty shoot-out must have beckoned loudly as a high-pressure situation with few variables, and one accompanied by an immediate way of measuring the individual's response: simply, did he score or miss?

The pair studied 269 shoot-outs that took place between 1976 and 2008, and found that the key to winning is not how accurate or cunning the players are with their penalties, but how good their captain is at calling the preliminary toss of the coin.

What Palacios-Huerta found after studying those 269 shoot-outs was that the team that goes first has a massive advantage. The shoot-out, often called a "lottery", is in fact no such thing. In a lottery you assume that everyone entering has an equal chance of winning, which should make the shoot-out a 50-50 confrontation. But the odds of winning a shoot-out are 60-40 in favour of the team that goes first. That is a massive difference. So big, in fact, as to make the shoot-out indefensible as a decider.

There's solid evidence that, stats or no stats, players themselves sensed that taking their penalties first was the thing to do. Of 240 players and coaches who were interviewed, virtually all of them said they preferred to take the first kick "to put pressure on their opponents".

Before 2003, the winner of the coin toss was automatically awarded the first kick. In 2003 that rule was altered, giving the toss-winner the right to choose. No records exist of the coin-toss choices, but in 20 cases in which Palacios-Huerta did establish who won the toss, 19 of the winners elected to kick first – with the one who didn't losing his shoot-out.

The pressure, it seems, weighs heavily on those who go second and feel to be in the position of having to constantly play catch-up. Meanwhile, the role of the keeper is considered negligible as both winners and losers have about the same proportion of saves, with most of the non-scoring penalties down to misses by the taker – and the team going second has more of those.

The statistics assembled by Palacios-Huerta and Apesteguia are a devastating indictment of the shoot-out and to continue using it would amount to not much more than deciding vital games with the toss of a coin – a once-used method that was quickly abandoned.

But having sounded what should be the penalty shoot-out's death knell, Palacios-Huerta has, alas, now worked out a reprieve.

"The odds on winning are 60-40 in favour of the team going first"

Tennis tie-breaks

The professor suggests that, instead of alternating, the order of the penalty takers should be like that used for serving in tennis tie-breaks. So, rather than a 10-kick shoot-out being patterned AB-AB-AB-AB-AB (with team A going first in each couplet), it should be AB-BA-AB-BA-AB, with team B going first in the second and fourth couplets, while team A goes first in the first, third and fifth.

While still miffed at my own lack of insight in not coming up with these stats, I have to ask the bigger question: how come FIFA and UEFA didn't notice either? It seems unlikely that they knew and kept their mouths shut – they surely wouldn't want games decided on the toss of a coin would they?

The biggest indictment here is of the International Football Association Board (IFAB), the group that makes the rules.

To put it mildly, IFAB has never been a pro-active body. The idea that it would take a close look at its own rules to see if they are working to produce a better game or not is not one that seems ever to have occurred to the eight IFAB members. Their current rule book gives us two pages of fussy detail on how the referee must organise a shoot-out – "the referee keeps a record of the kicks being taken", that sort of thing – but it seems no one bothered to check whether this is a procedure that works fairly.

IFAB views its work in a much too narrow-minded way, paying attention mostly to the mechanics of applying the rules. It ignores the effects of its rules on the playing of the game, it shows no feel for the aesthetics of football. If IFAB does not wish to take an overall look at the game and to work out what rules are necessary to maintain its integrity on the one hand and, yes, its beauty, on the other, then it should be abolished in favour of a new, more dynamic, body that will take a more holistic approach. L

Safe bet...the team taking the first penalty usually goes on to win

Jim Holden

Hypocrisy at heart of English Word Cup angst

THERE WAS fury, bewilderment and rampant hypocrisy across English football after the humiliating failure to win the right to host the 2018 World Cup. The scorn for FIFA, Russia and Qatar was unbridled – and sometimes unsavoury.

Unintentionally, no doubt, the insular English ranting was exemplified best by Harry Redknapp, the popular and successful manager of Tottenham Hotspur, who is one of the favourites to become the next England team boss.

"The World Cup will go to Qatar, and probably a few other places that will have supporters looking for maps to find out where they are," said Redknapp.

"How can that be right? It's devastating when you build your hopes up that high and see them crushed by some faceless people in Zurich. Don't they make cuckoo clocks over there? Well, a lot of those guys must be living in cloud-cuckoo-land to ignore our bid."

The English mood was that FIFA had sold out to the oil money of Russia and Qatar, most probably with an element of financial corruption involved.

This may or may not be true, on either count, but the rest of the world looked at all the overseas money flooding into the Premier League and wondered how English football could react so shamelessly and with such risible hypocrisy.

Wasn't Roman Abramovich – the oil magnate celebrating his role as part of the victorious Russian 2018 bid – the man who has financed Chelsea's plunder of trophies? Hasn't the English game gleefully accepted the riches of Qatar's close neighbours Abu Dhabi to revitalise Manchester City?

The allegations of corruption within the FIFA voting process should be taken very seriously, but a moral crusade from English football rankled in many places. Leading the way was Roger Burden, whose response to England's bid capturing only two votes was to withdraw his candidacy to be the new FA Chairman, saying: "I recognise that an important part of the role is liaison with FIFA and I am not prepared to deal with people whom I cannot trust."

He was a hero for the day at home by playing to the gallery; the legacy was to move the righteous English even further from a position where they could influence global football for the good.

There was hypocrisy here, too. Is this the same England which has seen many allegations of corruption and financial impropriety within its own game? Oh yes. The BBC *Panorama* programme that investigated FIFA's dealings has also looked at accusations of cash bungs taken by high-profile Premier League managers in the past few years, yet none of the big names aired in that broadcast has ever gone to court.

No, the football world is less than keen to be lectured by England – and you can understand why.

There was another crucial aspect to England's 2018 failure: they have been weak not only at playing the power game within FIFA – where is England's Michel Platini or Franz Beckenbauer? – but also hopeless at playing the game when it comes to FIFA's prestige junior tournaments.

Start again...England need a new direction, particularly at junior level

England forever send third-rate squads when they qualify – last year's World Under-20 event in Egypt being a case in point. Premier League clubs are extremely reluctant to allow their best youngsters to represent their country, in clear contrast to other major football nations. The star of the 2005 Under-20 tournament, won by Argentina, was Lionel Messi in a team that also included Sergio Aguero. Spain always send their best kids – Cesc Fabregas and David Silva went to that same competition.

This issue has never been a concern in England but it is for many others, including the FIFA power-brokers who organise them – and who decide where World Cups will be staged. To them, the English attitude is regarded as contempt rather than ambivalence.

Do not discount this as a compelling factor why England were rejected for the 2018 World Cup. Also, and this is not a passing thought, the reluctance to send junior players to global youth tournaments to gain experience is surely part of the reason why the full England team invariably disappoints on the biggest stage of all.

> "Premier League clubs are reluctant to allow the best youngsters to represent their country"

Later this year the World Under-20 tournament is to be held in Colombia, from July 29 to August 20. England have qualified and their best team would be competitive. But that would mean Premier League clubs releasing players like Jack Wilshere and Jack Rodwell for a competition which clashes with the start of the Premier League season.

It just won't happen. England won't have a chance of becoming world youth champions. And such indifference will only help to postpone even longer the day when England win a vote for the honour of staging the World Cup again. **L**

HEROES...

L KRISTINE LILLY

The USA women's international announced her retirement at the age of 39 after a 24-year career in which she scored 130 goals in a world-record 352 international appearances.

Calling time...Lilly

L TP MAZEMBE

DR Congo's African club champions became the first side from the continent to reach the Club World Cup Final after they beat Brazil's Internacional in the semi-finals.

L XAVI

World Soccer's 2010 Player of the Year broke Migueli's long-standing appearance record when he played his 550th game for Barcelona against Athletic Bilbao in the Spanish Cup.

Record...Xavi

& VILLAINS

Protest...Ferguson and Pulis

L ALEX FERGUSON & TONY PULIS

Manchester United manager Ferguson withdrew players from loan spells at Preston North End in protest at his son Darren's sacking as manager of the second-tier club. Stoke City boss Pulis followed suit in a gesture of support.

Striker...Ba

L YOUNES KOUCHAME

Sent off for punching his Olympique Khouribga team-mate Mohamed El Askri as they walked off at half-time in their Moroccan league match against Raja Casablanca.

L DEMBA BA

The Hoffenheim forward went on strike in an attempt to force a transfer to West Ham United.

BLATTERWATCH

Keeping tabs on the FIFA president

A BUSY month for Mr Blatter, who came out fighting at the AFC Congress, defending FIFA following recent bad publicity. "The success story of FIFA can continue because we are in a comfortable situation, despite the criticism," he said. "We have the power and instruments to go against any attacks."

Over Christmas he gave an interview to Swiss newspaper *SonntagsZeitung* in which he outlined previously unknown plans for an "anti-corruption committee". This did not go down well with AFC president Mohammed Bin Hammam, who protested: "I don't appreciate that we find already that a committee has been formed, that members have been appointed and the code, or whatever, has been decided."

Earlier in December, Blatter was forced to apologise for comments made during a briefing of South African journalists that gay fans should "refrain from sexual activity" in Qatar in 2022.

Targeted...gay fans

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HEADLINERS

People in the news...on and off the pitch

Rafa Benitez

Spaniard sacked by Internazionale despite Club World Cup triumph

ITALY

STEERING INTERNAZIONALE to the world club title should have been the crowning glory for Rafa Benitez. Instead, victory over African side TP Mazembe precipitated the end of his brief stint in charge of the reigning Italian and European champions.

The Spaniard had gone into the tournament in the United Arab Emirates under intense pressure following a string of poor results. But instead of using the triumph in Abu Dhabi to shore up his vulnerable position, Benitez used the spotlight to call for more funds in the transfer market from Inter owner Massimo Moratti.

"Now we will have a calmer period but to go forward we need total support. If we get that we can improve," said Benitez. "By support I mean first and foremost in the transfer market. I've spoken to Moratti.

"I've always done my job right from the beginning, and I need to have control of the players and what they do. I need this support, which you should always have and which should be total, otherwise you're always blaming someone and the team doesn't improve."

Up until that point, Moratti had backed Benitez, who had replaced Champions League-winning coach Jose Mourinho in the summer. Despite Inter's poor league form, which saw them slip to seventh in Serie A, doubts about his training methods and some poor tactical decisions, Moratti hinted that he was prepared to persist with Benitez, saying: "Ten years ago, in such a situation, I would have been happy to bring down the curtain."

On the fringe...Benitez applauds Inter's victory in Abu Dhabi

But Benitez's post-match comments set up a game of brinkmanship with Moratti from which there would only be one winner. After more than a week of speculation, Benitez was sacked in an email sent by club lawyers while he was on a pre-Christmas holiday back in Liverpool, where he still has a family home.

After spending six years at Anfield, Benitez had lasted barely six months in Italy.

In Benitez's defence, replacing Mourinho, the coach who had overseen the end of Inter's long wait for European success, was always going to be difficult. He was not helped by the sale of Mario Balotelli and a lack of adequate replacements. His cause was also hampered by injuries to key players, including two of last season's outstanding performers, Diego Milito and Wesley Sneijder.

Former Milan coach Leonardo was named as Benitez's replacement until the end of the season and, between now and then, many names will be put forward as permanent appointments, including Fabio Capello and Luciano Spalletti.

Some nostalgic Liverpool fans held out hope of Benitez returning to Liverpool to replace the under-fire Roy Hodgson, but his future more likely lies back home in Spain. It remains to be seen how long he will have to wait for the right opportunity to become available. After hefty pay-offs from Liverpool and Inter, Benitez can afford to bide his time.

Gavin Hamilton

Your time is running out...Benitez's game of brinkmanship with Moratti could bring only one winner

Edin Dzeko

Manchester City's new signing has the potential to be a European superstar

ENGLAND

A FIGURE of fun in some quarters thanks to a string of gaffes and indiscretions, Manchester City's controversial chief executive Garry Cook will have gone a long way to redress the balance with the part he played recently in bringing in Wolfsburg's outstanding Bosnian striker Edin Dzeko.

Needless to say, it helps no end to be bankrolled by a super-rich sheikh with the deepest of pockets, but with virtually every leading club in Europe looking longingly at Dzeko, it was by no means a foregone conclusion that he would end up in sky blue, and for successfully selling the Eastlands dream to the 24-year-old, Cook deserves a rare portion of praise.

Of course, City's latest acquisition has not come cheap. To seal the deal, they had to stump up a Bundesliga record £27million transfer fee and offer the player a king's ransom – £7.5m a year until 2014, plus a £2.5m signing-on bonus. But even in these times of generalised austerity, if it brings success to the club it will be money well spent.

With his multiple assets – strength in the air, powerful two-footed shooting, speed off the mark, silky technique and elegant and intelligent movement off the ball – Dzeko does not appear to have a weakness and should be the perfect foil for the hyperactive Carlos Tevez in the City attack.

His multicoloured palette of skills also include the ability to drop deep and create. Finishing, however, is comfortably his principal vocation and in three-and-a-half years at Wolfsburg he has been good for goals galore: 26 in 2008-09 as his club sensationally won the Bundesliga, 22 last term to end up as the country's top scorer, and another 10 this season.

"I can't imagine Edin not being a huge success in English football," says Felix Magath, the coach who signed him for Wolfsburg for £3.5m from Czech side Teplice in the summer of 2007. "He's already an international-class striker and I'm convinced he has several higher gears to find. Once he's settled in England, I'm sure he will be one of the best goalscorers in the Premier League.

"He can do as much damage as a Rooney, a Drogba or a Torres. He desperately wanted this move to one of the big European leagues and, knowing his determination and work ethic, he will do everything to make his time at Manchester City a productive one."

Magath is right to emphasise Dzeko's almost insatiable desire to learn new tricks, to never stand still. Despite his skyscraper frame, his aerial ability was nothing to write home about on arriving at Wolfsburg, but he religiously set about fixing the fault, going on to contribute nine headed goals to his club's Bundesliga coronation in 2009.

Many keen observers of the European game see Dzeko as the heir apparent to the great Dutch front runner Marco Van Basten and there is a similarity of style: the same elegant movement off the ball and explosive finishing, the identical adhesive ball control, particularly when using the chest.

"I don't believe it's going too far to liken Dzeko to Van Basten," says former Germany striker and coach Rudi Voller. "It leaps out at you. When I see Edin's skill on the ball, two good feet, strong heading and quickness, I automatically think of Van Basten. The only difference is that Dzeko is a more robust player."

Short of putting Dzeko under lock and key, Wolfsburg did all they could to retain their star player, turning down his pleas to join Milan – the team he supported as a boy – in the summer of 2009, hoping to dissuade would-be buyers with a £35m price tag and making him club captain last summer.

Yet in the end, they just had to let him go. Usually so modest and professional, Dzeko had fallen prey this term to the odd display of pique and with the VW-financed club struggling in 13th place at the winter break, the decision to cash in and rebuild was a logical one.

Nick Bidwell

Winning hand...(from left) Dino Zoff, Franco Causio, state president Sandro Pertini and Bearzot on the flight back from Spain

Enzo Bearzot
Coach of the 1982 World Cup winners

ITALY

THE OLD YEAR ended on a sad note in Italy with the death of 83-year-old Enzo Bearzot a couple of days before Christmas. Coach to a truly splendid national team – which played some stirring stuff to win the World Cup in 1982 but was probably even better four years earlier when going out to Holland in Argentina – Bearzot was nothing if not a much-loved father figure to the Italian world of football.

His death prompted many genuine expressions of appreciation for a man whose pipe smoking and understated ways seemed to belong to a very different era. Famous names, from UEFA president Michel Platini to current national coach Cesare Prandelli, expressed their respect and admiration for a man widely perceived to have written some of the most glorious pages in Italian football history.

We all have our memories of Bearzot, so let me recount one that is not linked to any famous occasion but rather to an interview in a Milan hotel 13 years ago.

I was working as a fixer for a BBC TV programme presented by former England international and current broadcaster Gary Lineker, and the idea was for Lineker to do an interview with Bearzot.

As it turned out, there was a lot of football activity going on in the hotel that day and the foyer was full of familiar and not-so-familiar football faces. As Bearzot walked into the hotel, I went to greet him and lead him to where our cameras were waiting.

As we made our way across the foyer, Gabriele Oriali – one of the heroes of the 1982 squad and then a transfer consultant for Bologna before taking a management role at Internazionale – rushed up to greet his old boss and blurted out: "Mister, thank you so much for all you did for us."

With a big smile, Bearzot replied quietly: "Thank you, but I did nothing. It was you lads who won the World Cup, not me."

The genuine, mutual affection between the two men was palpable. I imagine, too, that his relations with many other members of that 1982 squad were equally strong. Remember, it is the stuff of Italian football history that one of the great motivating factors behind that World Cup triumph was the united sense of purpose, the "us against them" feeling that had been created by tensions between the players and the Italian media. When it came to deciding on which side of the argument he stood, Bearzot opted very clearly for his players.

Later that day, when we came to interview Bearzot, we had a further insight into his nature. Given that Lineker did not speak Italian and that Bearzot did not speak English, I did the actual interviewing – that, after all, was why I was there.

The problem was that the interview obviously had to be filmed as a chat between Bearzot and Lineker, with no one else in camera shot. The idea was for me to ask the questions, from well out of view and for Bearzot to look at Lineker as he gave the answers. However, that proved beyond the old man as it seemed too impolite to him not to look at the person who had asked the questions. So instead of looking at Lineker, he kept straining around to answer me directly. It was just a moment of pleasant, old fashioned courtesy. In the end, he understood what our TV requirements were and gave Lineker a wonderful interview, full of frank observations about the heady days of Spain 1982.

Called *"Il Vecio"* (the old man) in his native Friuli, Bearzot kept a relatively low profile after bowing out at the Mexico 1986 World Cup. But for generations of Italians, one of the most lasting images of Bearzot will be that of him playing cards on the Italian presidential plane with state president Sandro Pertini, team captain Dino Zoff and one of his favourite players, Franco Causio, on the way home from Spain 1982. On the end of the table, as if it were just a piece of ornamentation put there by chance, sat the World Cup.

It is an image which sums up the sense of quiet pride in a job well done.

Paddy Agnew

Prince Ali
Jordan FA head ousts Chung Mong-joon to become Asia's new FIFA vice-president

JORDAN

PRINCE ALI BIN AL HUSSEIN of Jordan lists mountain climbing among his sporting interests – which is entirely appropriate as the president of Jordan's Football Association has scaled a mountain of very different proportions in ousting Chung Mong-joon after 16 years as the Asian confederation's vice-president of FIFA.

FIFA's choice of Qatar as host for the 2022 World Cup provided one clear example of a tilt in the balance of power within not only the global but the Asian regional game. Now Prince Ali has provided another. His success is also considered a victory for FIFA president Sepp Blatter, for whom Chung had long been an irritant.

At 35, Prince Ali is half the age of most of the FIFA ExCo which he is about to join. But that does not mean a lack of experience or knowledge of sport from either participatory or administrative aspects. The son of the late King Hussein and late Queen Alia recalls: "I remember playing football as a young child, then at school I played rugby. I tried my hand at wrestling when I was studying in the US and then, when I attended Sandhurst [Royal Military Academy] in England I was a boxer.

"After that, in the military I did a lot of skydiving. Also mountain climbing. So I can say I know about many sports from the grass-roots level. Knowing the value of sport is one of the reasons I want to make the most of this opportunity and take football forward in Asia."

In 1999 Prince Ali succeeded his brother as president of the Jordan FA, and one year later he created the West Asian Football Association, which now has 13 members.

Explaining the history of the West Asian FA, he says: "There was already an East Asian federation as well as the ASEAN federation. Of course we also had the Arab Football Federation, but that included nations from the African confederation. The west of Asia did not have a voice of its own and this was highly important considering the pace of development in football."

His election manifesto included creating a FIFA Vice-President's Development Fund to support the Asian associations in support of his programme's "pillars" – which he defined as better representation, wider and deeper youth development support, empowering women's football with a professionalism programme and protecting the game.

Intriguingly, "protecting the game" includes a pledge to "assess the role of technology in the future of football to ensure a levelling of the playing field."

That could be interesting.

Keir Radnedge

New Asian powerboker...Prince Ali

Samuel Eto'o
Record fourth African award for Internazionale striker

CAMEROON

The continent's best...Eto'o receives his award in Cairo

SAMUEL ETO'O can safely lay claim to be the greatest African footballer of all time after he was named African Footballer of the Year by CAF for a record fourth time.

The Cameroon striker was honoured at an awards ceremony in Cairo after he finished ahead of Ivory Coast forward Didier Drogba and Ghana's Asamoah Gyan. His fourth title – following victories in 2005, 2006 and 2007 – means that he has now overtaken the other three-times winners, Abedi Pele and George Weah.

Although he enjoyed little success at the World Cup, Eto'o did secure another record in 2010, with his goal for Internazionale in the Club World Cup making him the first player to score in seven different competitions in one calendar year. He was on target in the Italian League, Cup and Super Cup for Inter, as well as the Champions League and Club World Cup. He also scored for his country in the African Nations Cup and the World Cup, beating the previous record of six competitions, set by Barcelona's Pedro in 2009.

John Holmesdale

Keir Radnedge

Football's credibility facing its biggest test

Bochum hearing highlights Europe-wide threat of bribery

FOOTBALL'S international credibility has been on trial since the middle of October. Not, as one might think, in terms of the shady antics over the top of the Zurich hills within FIFA, but in the unlikely setting of the German city of Bochum.

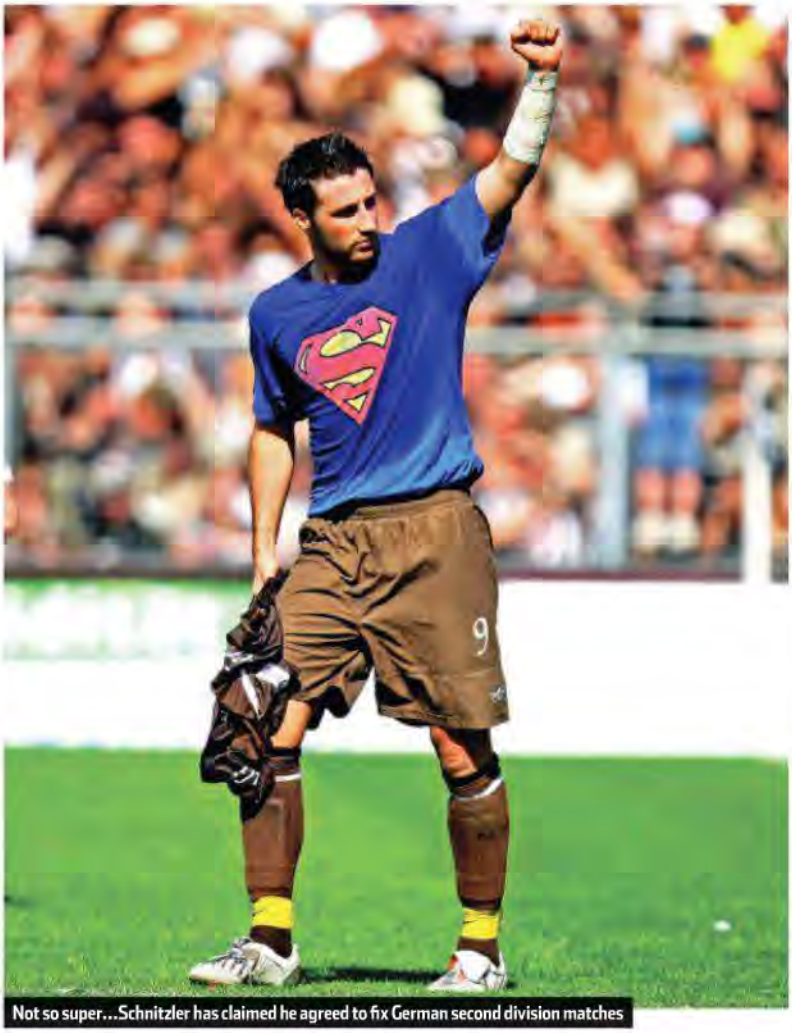
Set in the industrial Ruhr, Bochum boasts a population of under 400,000 and a second division football club, VfL Bochum, that has been relegated six times in the last 16 years. Less well-known is the city's high-tech police co-ordination centre and its court – and this is where the drama has been unfolding.

When FIFA president Sepp Blatter talks up the ethics committee and then turns up, as he did just before Christmas, with an off-the-cuff proposal for an anti-corruption commission, it makes one wonder if he has seen what is going on a few hundred miles to the north of the Zurich bunker.

To be fair, most of the world's media has ignored the Bochum court proceedings. *The Sunday Times* did a great job in nailing Reynald Temarii and Amos Adamu, but it is not enough for newspapers and magazines – yes, and TV programmes such as the BBC's *Panorama* – to blast their own particular stories. If they are serious about sports corruption – whether in the corridors of power or the dressing-room tunnels – they should have been following through on Bochum.

Indeed, it can be argued that what is being revealed day by day in court in the Ruhr is of much greater significance and danger than the antics of a handful of five-star-cosseted old men in committee rooms far removed from the grass-roots of the game.

If Blatter is serious about an anti-corruption force it needs to be truly independent



Not so super...Schnitzler has claimed he agreed to fix German second division matches

Crooked manipulation

Bochum is all about the systematic undermining, on behalf of betting syndicates (largely but not only in south-east Asia), of football as a credible sporting activity. It is the public exposure of the crooked manipulation of all manner of domestic and international competition which resulted, in November 2009, in a co-ordinated pan-European police action that led to 17 arrests – 15 in Germany, two in Switzerland – and the questioning of more than 300 people, plus the seizure of property and money in these and other countries.

One of the four men accused of masterminding a European wide bribery network which compromised referees and players is the Croat, Ante Sapina. He and his brothers, Milan and Cirko, first came to the attention of football authorities and police as the men who "ran" Robert Hoyzer, the up-and-coming young referee who went to jail for fixing German second-division and cup games. Ante Sapina was jailed for two years 11 months.

As it turns out, however, Hoyzer was merely an incidental sideshow to what has really been going on over the five or more years before the police swept into action.

The current case, unravelled partly through sophisticated phone-tapping, has embraced more than 200 matches in Austria, Belgium, Bosnia, Croatia, Germany, Hungary, Slovenia, Switzerland and Turkey. Many of these were below-the-radar second-tier games. Also investigated were 12 Europa League qualifiers and three in the Champions League.

Read more from Keir Radnedge at worldsoccer.com

Under suspicion...the Bochum court has heard allegations that the World Cup 2010 qualifier between Liechtenstein (in blue) and Finland, which ended in a 1-1 draw, was fixed

The insidious danger with match fixing – as with fixing in other sports, such as cricket for example – is that the betting scam may well depend not on the old-fashioned notion of the result but on events during the game.

Not that this was always the case. The Bochum prosecution – focusing on 32 games which sparked an estimated £10million betting pay-out – alleged that a 2010 World Cup qualifying tie in Germany's group was fixed: the 1-1 draw between Liechtenstein and Finland in Vaduz on September 9, 2009 and refereed by Bosnian official Novo Panic.

Arrange the detail

Ante Sapina said in evidence that he had met Panic ahead of the game in a hotel car park in Sarajevo to arrange the detail that each side should score at least once in the second half. In exchange for £125,000, Panic duly awarded Finland a 73rd-minute penalty from which Jari Litmanen scored. "It was clearly never a penalty," said Sapina.

Two months later Panic was also accused of fixing a European Under-21 qualifier between Switzerland and Georgia and was banned for life by UEFA.

So many strands keep on emerging on the sidelines. One is that betting pressure influenced Energie Cottbus' relegation from the Bundesliga in May 2009 after a defeat by – ironically – Bochum. The game turned on a late, disputed, match-winning penalty awarded to Bochum. Cottbus had an apparently justified claim of their own turned down.

Accused...Ante Sapina

Betting syndicate

Days before Sapina was up to give evidence, *Stern* magazine reported the admissions of Rene Schnitzler, a former St Pauli striker, that he had accepted more than £80,000 in bribes from a betting syndicate to fix five German second-division games.

Schnitzler – nicknamed "Superman" because of the vest he revealed beneath his shirt whenever he scored – said he agreed to fix away games in 2008 against Mainz (twice), Hansa Rostock, Augsburg and Duisburg. But he claimed that, while he had accepted the money, he had never made any attempt to influence the outcome of the games and had not even played in three of them.

The 25-year-old said he became friendly with a Dutchman he knew only as "Paul" and who had been acting on behalf of a betting operation.

"Paul" has been named as a key figure in the Bochum trial.

Schnitzler, who played for Borussia and Bayer Leverkusen as a teenager, made one senior Bundesliga appearance for Gladbach, against Bochum, before moving to St Pauli in 2007 on a two-year contract.

In the spring of 2009 Schnitzler, who has admitted to a gambling addiction, was released by St Pauli two months before the his contract was up. He dropped into the regional leagues and is currently without a club.

St Pauli spokesman Christian Bonig said: "We knew Rene had a betting issue but we did not know the depth of his problems. In the end he just did not respond in the way expected of a professional sportsman.

"We are shocked by what we have read and heard but, frankly, we don't think any of the games mentioned were influenced in any way. If they were, then we would have lost them all, wouldn't we? In the one game against Mainz we equalised in the last minute. Surely that says it all?"

A German league (DFL) spokesman said none of the games cited by Schnitzler had been picked up by the Sportradar policing system.

But that is the core of the issue: no one knows any more what is true and what is false. This is far more of a threat to the credibility of football than committee-room antics in Zurich.

If Blatter is serious about an anti-corruption force it needs to be truly independent, run under the auspicies of Interpol and the Court of Arbitration for Sport and with the full national government support from which the World Anti-Doping Agency benefits. Nothing less will do. **L**

Read more from Keir Radnedge at worldsoccer.com

2014 problems mount up for FIFA...

PRESIDENT LULA of Brazil had one last duty to fulfil before he handed over to successor Dilma Rousseff at the turn of the year: to sign into statute the law securing the tax-free status of all FIFA's 2014 World Cup activities, including the 2013 Confederations Cup.

Tax-free status is one of the essential guarantees demanded of the governments of any World Cup host. This has been widely criticised but has the benefit of obviating past confusion when not only commercial partners but even players and coaches were hit with tax demands from both the host nation and their own countries.

The Brazilian sports ministry has calculated that the concession is worthwhile. The loss of tax is estimated as up to £350million but will be far offset by the expected £3.8billion raised by tax on other activities and products generated by the World Cup hosting.

The states and cities involved in hosting matches must also copy the law into local statutes. Building and redevelopment of the 12 prospective stadia is also tax-free, worth up to £130m. This would cover only work for the World Cup, not for the 2016 Rio Olympics.

However, concerns are growing apace about delays in infrastructure construction. Mario Celso Cunha, newly appointed World Cup co-ordinator for Parana, believes that "two or even more" venues could be trimmed from the list. Concerns focus on both "white elephant" fears over new stadia and local government reluctance to fund airport redevelopment.

Natal, Brasilia, Cuiaba and Manaus could all be at risk, while uncertainty continues over a new stadium in Sao Paulo because of local finance wrangles which have already seen Morumbi discounted by FIFA as a venue for the 2014 opening match.

Cutting funds

Meanwhile, Rousseff's administration is cutting redevelopment funds dramatically. Originally £340m had been set aside, but economic pressures mean up to £200m could be sliced from the World Cup projects fund.

Expect FIFA to start to bang the table. Already president Sepp Blatter has evinced his own increasing impatience, saying: "Perhaps we have to remind Brazil that the World Cup is in three-and-a-half-years time. The issues are the same as with South Africa at this stage. What will happen if the stadia are not ready? Or the hotels? Do we have a Plan B in one pocket and a Plan C in another? Well, Plan B is Brazil – and Plan C is also Brazil. We're sure the Brazilians will do what has to be done.

"We cannot believe anything different – after all, this is a country of 220 million people with a strong economy. I am confident they will do it – certainly with a little encouragement here and there."

Work in progress...Brazilian Confederation head Ricardo Teixeira at the Mane Garrincha stadium in Brasilia

Damaged goods...a World Cup 2010 mascot on sale in Beijing

...GBG bankruptcy adds to woes

THE bankruptcy of Singapore-based Global Brands Group (GBG) may not have meant much to outsiders, but it meant plenty to FIFA because GBG was less than halfway into a seven-year contract as the main licensing agent for the world federation's own merchandise.

The deal covered licensing for branded products such as mascot-decorated sports and fashion items for the 2010 and 2014 World Cups in South Africa and Brazil. An unexplained feature of the latest blow to FIFA's credibility is that GBG may not have been paying its way for at least two years and yet the alarm bells never rang in Zurich.

Estimating the financial damage is problematic. The contract, presumably, can be reassigned but revenues from 2010 World Cup sales will probably have to be written off.

As to what this might mean financially, Swiss sources estimate that FIFA earned about £25million from merchandise licensing for the 2006 World Cup in Germany. On that basis, it might have expected to earn more than £38m from the latest finals in South Africa.

The contract, stretching from 2007 to 2014, allowed GBG to operate its own "FIFA stores". The first, quickly shut down, was opened at Singapore's Changi Airport in 2008. Others had been planned in London, Tokyo and Los Angeles. GBG's debts are estimated at between £65m and £100m.

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Real ins and

THEY CAN'T say he didn't warn them; but even now they are paying no heed. Jose Mourinho has been insisting on the need for a new striker at the Santiago Bernabeu almost from the day he walked through the door. For just as long, though, Real Madrid have resisted. And it appears that they are ready to resist a little longer – even though Mourinho's dark prophecy has been fulfilled. The question now is what the coach plans to do about it and whether the increasingly public stand-off will have consequences for the club.

After an outlay of over £70million on players, plus the almost £85m net spend it cost to replace Manuel Pellegrini with Mourinho and his technical staff for the next four years, Madrid warned him that there was not enough money to buy the striker he

Glad to be back...Kaka was the focus of attention as he made his return against Getafe (inset)

outs

Kaka's return from injury has given Real Madrid a much-needed boost following serious injury to Higuain

demanded. Mourinho, in return, warned Real Madrid that they were playing with fire as there were only two centre-forwards in the squad – Gonzalo Higuain and Karim Benzema – and it appeared he was not entirely convinced by either of them, as neither quite fitted his perfect profile.

The good news was that, bit by bit, Higuain won him over. But there was another issue too. What, Mourinho asked, if one of them got injured? "Then," he said, "we'll have to pray."

Time to get that mat out, then, because that is exactly what happened.

On the morning of the *clasico*, Higuain was seen hobbling round the team hotel. Amid speculation that this was another example of clever mind games, he was forced to pull out of the Madrid squad. It then emerged that his injury was rather more serious than had been assumed. A badly slipped disc in his back was aggravating the spinal nerve.

Club doctors recommended that Higuain undergo an operation. The likely time out of action would be, according to most estimates, between three and five months. The operation would also involve opening up Higuain's back and, not to put to fine a point on it, manipulating his spine. Hardly surprising, then, that the concerned striker sought a second opinion. Meanwhile, there were other opinions being voiced within the club – particularly at boardroom level.

Won over...Higuain gets Mourinho plaudit

Having visited another doctor, Higuain chose a conservative course of treatment. There was a chance that he might return sooner than first feared and, more importantly, avoid the surgeon's knife. Around 30 per cent of people responded to treatment, according to figures and doctors consulted by the Spanish media, while stressing that every case was different. It was a chance worth taking, and so the Argentinian began a process of rest and rehabilitation.

Much more serious

If the aim was to avoid surgery it didn't work. And yet, moved to put out a fire of their coach's making, Madrid claimed that it had.

In a press conference at the end of the Christmas break, Mourinho snapped: "Me and the club doctors knew right from the start that he had to be operated on but some *iluminado* [genius] decided otherwise. Now we have wasted a month. And now he will be out for six months."

It was the first anyone had heard of it – and it was much more serious than anyone had expected: Higuain would miss the rest of the season. It also provoked questions as to who exactly was the "genius" to whom Mourinho referred. Higuain? His father? Someone on the board?

The sense of irritation was only increased by the aftermath of the coach's extraordinary press conference in which he had demanded a meeting with president Florentino Perez, very pointedly noted that the players were "tired", laid bare that he felt that he had been given no support by the club, moaned about referees and the club's failure to speak up against them, complained at leaks to the media about contract negotiations for Pepe, and blew away director general – and supposedly his boss – Jorge Valdano by snapping: "I want to talk to the president; if I can talk to the number one why would I talk to anyone else?"

Higuain returned from Argentina and in a meeting at the Bernabeu it was decided that he would indeed go

under the knife. But, said a statement from the club, the conservative treatment had helped to facilitate and accelerate the rehab process and he would be out for an estimated two to three months. It sounded like the classic fudge, an act of political pacification, a judgement of Solomon: "You were both right."

It did little to genuinely heal the rifts. As Higuain prepared to fly to the United States for his operation in Chicago, the sports newspaper *Marca* got into a curious fit of patriotic umbrage, complaining that the player was going abroad when "Spain has the best surgeons in the world". Some questioned the two-month prognosis, others questioned Mourinho's dire warning of six months out. Was he just cranking up the pressure for a signing?

Familiar theme

It looked that way. Mourinho was not placated. Before Madrid's Spanish Cup game against Levante he revisited a familiar theme: the lack of strikers in the squad – a situation, he claimed, that not only limited his options on the pitch but his options when it came to managing his squad and making changes.

And yet Mourinho added: "I don't expect any reinforcements now." He had been denied in the summer and even Higuain's injury did not appear sufficient to win over the board. Hugo Almeida had signed elsewhere. Fernando Llorente, likely to join in the summer from Athletic Bilbao, would not move yet. And Madrid had continued to resist. Valdano had stood firm and – perhaps surprisingly for Mourinho – had also been backed by Perez. There would be no new forward.

Actually, there would be one. Valdano was keen to make Mourinho see that he did have a significant reinforcement – a former Ballon d'Or winner, a £55m winter "signing". In the first game back after Christmas, Kaka finally made his first appearance this season following surgery on his torn meniscus knee ligament. The Brazilian came on with 10 minutes remaining against Getafe and admitted afterwards there had been times when he doubted that he would return at all.

> **"You can hunt with dogs and you can also hunt with cats – but not in the same way"**
>
> *Jose Mourinho makes an oblique reference to Karim Benzema's abilities up front*

Point of attack...neither Benzema (left) nor Ronaldo fits the bill for Mourinho

Out of tune...Mourinho (left) and Valdano differ over Madrid's needs

"I am delighted for him. He is a super player: I know him from Italy," said Mourinho. "You lot hardly know him at all, he has not shown anything at all in Spain. He has not played this season and he was almost always injured last season too."

That was perhaps not entirely true – Kaka's first season in Spain, while hugely disappointing, was not as disastrous as is generally assumed – but the player himself agreed, saying: "I have not yet proven anything, and that is the challenge now."

But if Mourinho was happy with Kaka's return, it does not solve the immediate problem. After all, as Mourinho put it: "I have lots of attackers, but they are not central strikers." Before Madrid's game with Levante, two days after Kaka's return, he added: "I have only one striker – and that's Karim Benzema."

But Mourinho does not appear to be especially enamoured with Benzema who has scored just one league goal. "You can hunt with dogs," he said before Christmas, "and you can also hunt with cats – but not in the same way." The cat in question was widely interpreted to be Benzema. The Frenchman himself insists that he is a second striker, not a reference point up front. But Mourinho, who also judged that youth teamer Alvaro Morata is "not yet ready", has little alternative.

Or does he?

Ronaldo up front

Some within the club believe Mourinho has plenty of alternatives in a squad whose value is well over £300m. One option is for Kaka to line up alongside Angel Di Maria and Mesut Ozil, moving Cristiano Ronaldo up front. After all, the Portuguese has a quite astonishing 19 goals in just 17 league games, and his fantastic goalscoring record at Manchester United has not gone unnoticed either.

Mourinho remains publicly unconvinced – at least while the window stays open – and harbours faint hopes of winning the battle with the board but will not ease off on the pressure until it is definitively too late.

"Cristiano is a fantastic player," Mourinho said. "He has freedom and movement, scoring goals coming in from a false-winger position. He is extremely dangerous if you play on the break with pace and room in which to move." But, he added: "He is not a centre-forward."

With the pressure proving fruitless and even an injury not persuading the club, it is hard to escape the conclusion that very soon, Ronaldo might have to be. **L**

Shell-shocked

Australians were stunned by the scale of their defeat in the 2022 World Cup bidding race

AUSTRALIA

LES MURRAY in Sydney

FRANK LOWY is no loser. This is a man who survived the Nazi holocaust as a teenager, migrated to Australia in 1951 as a penniless refugee and become the country's most successful and richest businessman.

When Lowy starts something, he usually finishes it. Just as he amassed his fortune as a shopping-centre mogul, he has steered Australian football to unimagined heights since he became chairman of Football Federation Australia in 2003 – among them the launch of the fully professional A-League, laying down the support needed (much of it from government) for the national team to qualify for two successive World Cups after a 32-year absence from the big stage, and Australia's integration into the Asian Football Confederation.

Winning the bid to host the 2022 World Cup would have been the crowning achievement for the 80-year-old who has known very few failures in his life. But Lowy failed on this occasion, with the nod going to the tiny state of Qatar as Australia gained just one vote on the 22-man panel – something that utterly shocked Australians who found it difficult to believe that a man like Lowy could be so wrong.

When the news broke in Australia, at around 3am on December 3, opinions were split. Either Lowy had put up a bad bid, which the government funded to the tune of £29million, or he had been taken for a sucker by a voting panel with dubious motives.

The impact of Australia's failure to land the 2022 World Cup needs to be taken in the context of a bidding country which desperately needed it – unlike say England, Spain or Holland, or even Japan, South Korea or the USA where it has been staged recently.

A World Cup in Australia, a multicultural community of 22-million people of all races, colours and cultures, stood as an incomparable unifying force. No other sport, in a country where sports of global irrelevance dominate, has the capability to do this. In terms of legacy, this was just one of many opportunities that were squandered when FIFA spurned the Australian bid.

Leader...Lowy

Another was the chance to tap into the vigorous economic growth of east Asia, where Australia is geographically seated. Frank Lowy and the Australians made this point obsessively through their campaign, suggesting that, by 2022, east Asia, with China at its epicentre, will be the Middle Kingdom in terms of economic relevance. FIFA should have had no worries about where revenue opportunities would prevail in 2022.

But this fell on deaf ears with the FIFA executive committee and they opted for the desert kingdom instead.

Australia's faith in FIFA, as a body designated to protect the game and its broad interests, is now at an all-time low. And you could say the same about reactions in the USA, England and some other countries whose bids were overlooked in favour of Qatar (2022) and Russia (2018).

Astounding choice

Few people in Australia believe FIFA had solid, legitimate and logical reasons to choose Qatar, whose assessment by FIFA's technical team was the weakest of all nine bidders across the two World Cups. The fact that Qatar should get 11 votes in the first round and Australia only one astounds them. It didn't help when two members of the voting committee called the Australian delegation minutes after the announcement claiming to have been the one to have voted for Australia.

Still, FIFA is not getting all of the blame. Many in the Australian media have taken the bid team and Lowy himself to task over the failure and, angered by the taxpayers' money that was spent on the bid, have called for a government inquiry.

This story has a bit to run yet. L

Australian anguish...Socceroos fans discover their country's bid to stage the 2022 World Cup has been voted out

Bundesliga top dogs

It is hard to see anyone catching Borussia Dortmund in the second half of the season

SEPARATED BY A 30-minute train journey, Ruhr arch-rivals Borussia Dortmund and Schalke share a locale, industrial-revolution roots, enormous working-class fan bases and a no-nonsense approach to the game. This season, though, the two clubs have been worlds apart: the penthouse for runaway league leaders Dortmund; the outhouse for the chronically-erratic Schalke, who in the space of six months have gone from national runners-up to mid-table imposters.

With half a campaign to go, and some 51 points still to be fought for, the sporting gods may yet have some rewrites in store. But it would take an almighty change of celestial plan for Dortmund not to collect their first title since 2002. Only beaten twice prior to Christmas – an opening day home loss to Bayer Leverkusen and an away defeat in Frankfurt in the final pre-festivity round – the *Schwarzgelben* went into the winter break a massive 10 points clear of Mainz and Leverkusen. In the entire history of the Bundesliga no team has ever thrown away such a lead.

Dortmund are rightly thought to hold all the aces: the psychological skills of much-vaunted young coach Jurgen Klopp (who recently extended his contract until 2014); the confidence amassed these past few months; and the palpable hunger and desire of brilliant young players such as midfield aces Nuri Sahin and Mario Gotze, and the ubiquitous Japanese newcomer Shinji Kagawa (see Talent Scout, page 65).

A springtime implosion does not seem on the cards. Klopp is a master at keeping the twin spectres of complacency and pressure at bay and, remarkably for a team with so few old hands, Dortmund ooze adaptability and intelligence – one moment coming out with all guns blazing, the next playing with complete control and patience.

For some critics, Dortmund's achievements can be attributed to a lack of competition in the Bundesliga, the shoddy work last autumn of big hitters like Bayern Munich, Schalke, Hamburg and Werder Bremen. But that is unfair. A man-for-man comparison of the Dortmund and Bayern starting line-ups this season would have many of the boys from the Ruhr with better grades, and arguably only one member of the Bayern defence – right-back Philipp Lahm – would be worthy of a place in the Dortmund side right now.

What Schalke boss Felix Magath would give to be in Klopp's shoes. Teams led by Magath are normally similar to top-of-the-range German white goods: trusty, solid and easy to service. These days, though, that stamp of quality does not apply. Peaks (an impressive qualification for the last-16 of the Champions League) and troughs (seven Bundesliga losses) bring the Schalke coach out in a cold sweat and, true to form, his response to the crisis was to form a mid-winter chain gang.

The gloves are off

After a 5-0 loss at Kaiserslautern in late November, Magath banned hats, gloves and tracksuit bottoms from the club's glacial training ground and, in a move Ebenezer Scrooge would have been proud of, cut the squad's holiday entitlement to just five days. Same old Felix, same old medicine-ball regime.

In fifth spot going into the new year, and a full 14 points adrift of Dortmund, Bayern know that the retention of their title is now an impossible dream. The Bavarians exhibited frailties aplenty in the first half of the season – especially at the back – and though he does not do self-doubt, coach Louis Van Gaal clearly has boxed himself in on occasion with his stubbornness, particularly his insistence that left-back Diego Contento and centre-back Daniel Van Buyten are of the required standard.

Fortunately for Bayern, the mid-term interval gives them a chance to reassess and regroup, and with attacking jewels Arjen Robben and Franck Ribery fully fit again after long-term injuries a resurgence could be around the corner. General manager Christian Nerlinger has bet a TV presenter £8,500 that his side would still finish second in the league and he may be in the money come May.

One important lesson to be gleaned from the current campaign is that enterprise pays. Although their results tailed off as the nights drew in, Mainz and their charismatic coach Thomas Tuchel proved with their seven-game winning streak at the start of the season that smallish provincial clubs do not, as a matter of course, have to play with fear. Black Forest outfit Freiburg, led expertly by the underrated Robin Dutt, also took a positive tack to break into the top six, while the champagne football of Jupp Heynckes' Leverkusen was often a joy to behold – quite an achievement for an ever-changing team plagued by injuries to its main men, notably Germany skipper Michael Ballack and striker Stefan Kiessling.

New deal... Klopp

But not everyone in the Bundesliga was an advocate of the beautiful game. Hannover, for one, were hardly pretty to watch, concentrating on a long-ball, counter-attacking game. It was effective, though, and thanks to their togetherness, iron will and the clinical finishing of Ivorian striker Didier Konan Ya, the northerners never stopped amassing points, ending the year in a wonderful fourth-place – their best-ever autumn championship and a perfect tribute to their late goalkeeper Robert Enke, who sadly took his own life in 2009.

As for the flops, Hamburg and Wolfsburg spring readily to mind.

A perplexing combination of attacking magic and a tendency to self-destruct defensively, Hamburg only just scraped into the top half, while Steve McClaren's first season at the Wolfsburg helm rapidly turned sour, so much so that the VW-backed club have relegation fears to exorcise.

The good news for McClaren is that several clubs are even worse, namely the ghost ship that is Koln, Borussia Monchengladbach – who managed only two wins in the first-half of the campaign – and Stuttgart, champions as recently as 2007 but seemingly heading straight to hell.

Beaten 11 times in their opening 17 games, the Stuttgarters are already on their third coach of the season (Christian Gross, Jens Keller and now Bruno Labbadia). The last time they consumed so many leaders, back in 1974-75, the club went down. An omen? **L**

Heading for the title...Dortmund's Marcel Schmelzer beats Aaron Hunt of Werder Bremen

Embarrassed in Abu Dhabi

Internacional's Club World Cup defeat to TP Mazembe was deemed "a historic disgrace"

BRAZIL

TIM VICKERY in Rio de Janeiro

Semi-final shocker...Internacional keeper Renan is unable to prevent African champions TP Mazembe scoring a memorable 2-0 success in the Club World Cup in Abu Dhabi

INTERNACIONAL'S players refused their bonus payments for finishing third in the Club World Cup. Winning the third-place play-off was totally overshadowed by their 2-0 defeat to African champions TP Mazembe in the semi-final, a result quickly referred to in the Brazilian media as "a historic disgrace".

The South American champions had travelled with optimism, taking an astonishing 10,000 supporters to Abu Dhabi. They hoped to not only beat the European champions – as they did against Barcelona to win the trophy in 2006 – but to do so facing Internazionale on equal terms. Instead came a nightmare: losing to Mazembe and missing the chance to have a crack at the Italian Inter.

In hindsight, the result may not be as surprising as it first seemed. The Brazilian media tend to be dismissive of African clubs, but Mazembe had taken part in the Club World Cup the year before and had clearly learned from doing so – which, in itself, is justification for such a tournament.

Second, while Internacional had a more expansive, attractive side than the one that defeated Barcelona, they were also a more vulnerable one. Indeed, riding their luck in defence and breaking with determination, Mazembe were able to do to Inter what Inter had done to Barca.

The signs were there during the Brazilian championship, with support striker Taison sold after the Libertadores Cup win and not adequately replaced. Without his speed, Inter's power of penetration was notably reduced. Even so, when they managed to get behind Mazembe's defensive line, they found goalkeeper Muteba Kidiaba in top form.

And at the other end, veteran centre-back Indio is clearly past his best. He never looked secure against Mazembe and was unable to close down striker Mulota Kabungo to prevent the opening goal.

Another veteran, Argentinian midfielder Pablo Guinazu, also displayed signs of decline. He could not produce his normal fetch-and-carry game and was loose defensively when Dioko Kaluyituka cut in to score the clincher, beating Renan at his near post.

The goalkeeping position had been a headache for coach Celso Roth in the run-up to the tournament and Inter's mass travelling support evidently considered Renan at fault for the second goal, loudly booing him during the third-place play-off match against Asian champions Seongnam Ilhwa.

The South Koreans scored two late goals – Colombian attacking midfielder Mauricio Molina hit both – but the game was already over as a contest as Inter had cruised into a 4-0 lead. Dynamic midfielder Tinga, perhaps unwisely substituted against Mazembe, broke through to score the opening goal. Argentinian international playmaker Andres D'Alessandro – rarely able to impose himself against Mazembe – then came into his own, scoring one and helping set up two for much-criticised centre-forward Alecsandro.

But the Brazilians' celebrations at claiming third place were hollow – and made even more so by what followed. The ease with which Internazionale brushed Mazembe aside in the Final served to highlight the continuing gap between club football in Europe and South America – hardly surprising, since the best South Americans, along with the leading players from all over the world, make their living in the major European leagues.

Nevertheless, the possibility exists that the gap might narrow a little in the next few years. On the one hand there is Europe's financial crisis; on the other there is the current strength of the Brazilian currency and the increased capacity of Brazil's clubs to raise revenue from sponsorship deals. All of this makes it easier for clubs to bring players back from Europe, hold on to their own stars for a little while longer and also hunt for talent elsewhere in South America.

Santos are an interesting example. They have managed to repatriate former idol Elano, who at 29 should still have plenty to offer. Moreover, they thwarted Chelsea's bid for wonderkid Neymar and eagerly anticipate the return from injury of playmaker Paulo Henrique Ganso.

There are plenty of other promising players on the Santos conveyor belt. If they were to win this year's Libertadores – and they will certainly be among the favourites – then, as long as they can keep the team together for a few more months, it could well be that they would travel to Japan for the 2011 Club World Cup with dreams of winning in style and proving themselves a little more durable than Internacional. **L**

Breaking through

The Club World Cup capped an exciting year for Africa

AFRICA

MARK GLEESON

TP MAZEMBE LOST to amateur opposition on their first trip to the Club World Cup, but one year on they surprised everyone by reaching the Final in Abu Dhabi.

It brought to an end the successive sequence of Finals between European and South American opposition, and came as a massive fillip at the end of an exciting year for African football.

Mazembe's success is made all the more remarkable by the fact that they hail from one of the continent's most dysfunctional countries, ravaged by lengthy civil strife and rendered a virtual basket case by the complete collapse of their infrastructure.

But the Democratic Republic of Congo did once have its glory years and Mazembe have long been one of African football's grand old dames...until surprisingly turning into a sleek super model of late.

The club from Lubumbashi were one of the powerhouses in the early days of pan-African competition but faded from prominence in tandem with the decline of their country.

Winners and losers

Founded by Benedictian monks in 1939, Mazembe played in four successive African Champions Cup Finals from 1967 to 1970, winning the first two and losing the last two, and won the 1980 African Cup-winners Cup.

Over the last decade the club has steadily risen again, despite the drudgery of its surroundings, to again take pride of place at the head of African football's club pecking order.

Two successive African Champions League wins, in 2009 and 2010, were followed in December by progress to the Club World Cup Final against Internazionale. It is a revival that has much to do with the patronage, cash and the passion of powerful backer Moise Katumbi – a supporter turned millionaire turned powerful politician.

Katumbi has bankrolled the team during the last decade, with his investment turning Mazembe slowly around and ultimately catapulting them to their two successive Champions League titles.

> **"Nobody gave us the slightest chance when we arrived in Abu Dhabi"**
>
> *MoiseK atumbi, Mazembe's owner*

The role of Katumbi, the son of a Greek businessman and local woman, as patron of Mazembe has made him massively popular in the region, so much so that he was voted in as governor of the mineral-rich Katanga province in 2007. He has been hailed Africa's Roman Abramovich, ploughing relentless cash into the side and making his team stronger with the purchase of the best talent in the country.

High wages mean they can keep their best players at home despite interest from foreign clubs – as exemplified by the repeated overtures Mazembe have been able to spurn for their striker Tresor Mputu.

Katumbi is building a stadium, football academy and training facilities too and is eager to create a dynasty. Controlling the finances of the mineral-rich province makes his ambition easier to fulfil and his sights are now set on a record-breaking triple in the Champions League.

"The impact of this achievement on Mazembe is very big because we are the first African team to reach the Final," says Katumbi. "Nobody gave us the slightest chance when we arrived in Abu Dhabi. We saw that all the publicity for the tournament featured the other teams but not us. Our success was therefore a great surprise for everyone.

"We want to prepare consequently for the next Champions League because we want to chase a triple of titles. But we know all Africa's big teams will be gunning for us." L

Dance of delight...Mazembe players celebrate their 2-0 win over Internacional of Brazil in the semi-final of the Club World Cup

Laser-sharp rivalry

Malaysia overcame bitter rivals Indonesia to lift the south-east Asian AFF Cup

BRYAN KAY in Kuala Lumpur

IT SHOULD HAVE been a humdinger regional Final contested by two great rivals but, sadly, the keenly anticipated affair became a ridiculous tale of green lasers and bitter acrimony.

Malaysia and Indonesia were going head-to-head for the biennial ASEAN Football Federation Cup between Christmas and the new year in a highly popular tournament involving the nations of a region that nestles south of China and stretches down close to the north coast of Australia.

As large chunks of the world indulged in the festive excesses, the 2010 two-leg Final made a minor entrance into the global conscience by penetrating news agendas around the globe for all the wrong reasons.

Malaysia ultimately dispensed with Indonesia 3-0 in the first leg in Kuala Lumpur, but the game came to an abrupt halt midway through the second period when, at 0-0, match officials threatened to abandon the fixture. As the drama unfolded, it was alleged that green laser beams were being directed from the home section of the crowd into the eyes of visiting players.

Boisterous atmosphere

The luminous rays were clearly visible inside the stadium, with play halted for nearly 10 minutes as the match officials and representatives of both countries discussed the escalating situation. As discussions took place in the touchline technical area, the home crowd grew more boisterous, turning the pressure-cooker atmosphere up a notch by throwing firecrackers, bottles and other projectiles when it looked like the game might not continue. A sign on the stadium's giant electronic scoreboards warned spectators that the match would be "postponed" if the use of the lasers did not stop.

The tensions eased, the game continued – and it was Malaysia who restarted much the brighter, scoring three quick goals to take control of the tie. Indonesia appeared shell-shocked, possibly unnerved by a combination of the stoppage and the increasingly deafening atmosphere.

Perhaps not surprisingly, claims of cheating ensued as Indonesian officials reacted with fury to the events played out before an 85,000 near-capacity crowd. As a consequence, security was beefed up ahead of the return in the Indonesian capital of Jakarta three days later with an estimated 10,000 personnel deployed.

Malaysia may have lost the second leg 2-1, but the reverse was not enough to stop them picking up the trophy 4-2 on aggregate for the first time. The acrimony continued in the lead-up to that game with the Malaysian media venting their spleen about the hostility of Indonesian fans towards the visitors. Large, intimidating crowds of locals were reported to be at the Malaysian squad's training base, shouting and brandishing abusive slogans.

Even before a ball was kicked in anger, an article in the Christmas Day edition of Malaysia's *New Straits Times*, under the headline "Indonesia do not fear fans", detailed the fierce rivalry that exists between the neighbouring nations.

Attempting to play down hostilities, Indonesia's team spokesman Andi Darussalam said: "This is a football match for 90 minutes and there is nothing else to it. We are all friends from the same background. We should not bring politics into it." The Malaysian paper said Darussalam's words were an attempt "to defuse distaste for the Malaysian team by a segment of the Indonesian fans".

But before the dust settled on Malaysia's maiden win, Indonesia's Austrian coach Alfred Riedl fanned the flames by saying after the match that "the better team lost the tournament".

The rivalry and bad feeling between the two countries run deep. Many people across the two countries share a rich Malay ethnic heritage, but a deep wedge has been driven between the two states over issues ranging from maritime territorial disputes, alleged abuses of Indonesian migrant labour in more affluent Malaysia, and ethnic rivalry in a region that is a bona fide melting pot of different peoples. The hand of colonial powers is also evident: Malaysia is a former British colony, while Indonesia was previously under Dutch control. In the 1960s, tensions between the two nations almost erupted into all-out war over the now-divided island of Borneo.

> **"The better team lost the tournament"**
>
> *Indonesia coach Alfred Riedl*

Back home in Malaysia, as the result from Jakarta began to sink in, the victory was greeted with euphoria.

Malaysia's youthful squad arrived at the tournament with a measure of promise, but they suffered an almighty blip in the group stages, being humbled 5-1 by the team they would eventually overcome in the Final.

A deep sense of nervousness prevailed after that loss – the fans feared that anything other than a significant win on home soil in the Final's opening leg might see their charges wilt under the pressure of a dominant home crowd in the Jakarta return. In the event, Malaysia was afforded the rare privilege of going into a state of apoplexy. A national holiday was declared for the day after the deciding leg. "Heroes, every single one of them," declared the triumphant opening to a story in the *New Straits Times*.

In Indonesia, at least some sections of the press appeared to greet the overall result with a measure of good grace. "Malaysia win makes history," said a *Jakarta Post* headline. The newspaper went on to state that the Indonesian team had faced pulling off a miracle in order to fulfil the high expectations of their fans in the face of the first-leg 3-0 reverse.

It is now four times unlucky for the Indonesians in a tournament that, for the moment at least, represents one of their few chances of glory at full international level.

For Malaysia, it was a triumph that came at the second time of asking. Their two Final appearances bookend AFF Cup history – the inaugural event in 1996, when it was known as the Tiger Cup, saw Malaysia edged out by Thailand 1-0 in Singapore.

Malaysia now look towards the future with a measured sense of hope over its promising crop of youngsters. And they have medals to prove it. **L**

Winners...Malaysia's players celebrate their AFF Cup success after securing a famous 4-2 aggregate win against Indonesia

Losing the faith

Martin Jol quit as Ajax coach after key figures turned against him

KLAAS-JAN DROPPERT in The Hague

SOONER OR LATER the axe will fall in Amsterdam, and Martin Jol became the seventh coach to leave Ajax in the past 10 years, the former Tottenham and Hamburg boss resigning at the end of last year after powerful figures inside and outside the club turned against him.

Jol was appointed in the summer of 2009 and, despite losing the league title to Twente, he had a good first season, winning the Dutch Cup. Most importantly, he was the first coach since 2005 to guide Ajax into the group stage of the Champions League – a hugely important achievement, in both sporting and financial terms.

Jol was expected to do even better this term, but the 54-year-old felt he did not have the players to achieve such success. Last summer he flirted with Fulham while complaining he couldn't strengthen his squad in Holland. The club did eventually back him with investment, but it was to be Jol's last big victory.

On the pitch, Ajax struggled, despite keeping star players such as Luis Suarez, Maarten Stekelenburg and Gregory Van der Wiel. New arrivals Mounir El Hamdaoui and a clearly overweight Mido proved too similar in style to Suarez, and suddenly Ajax were without their famous wing play.

It didn't help when assistant Danny Blind complained, behind his back, that the coach was destroying the club, while Jol – who chose not to pick Blind's son, Daley, for the first-team – revealed the relationship with his assistant was a "marriage of convenience". However, the biggest problem didn't come from within the club. After being outclassed by Real Madrid at the Santiago Bernabeu, Jol was criticised by Ajax's greatest player of all time, Johan Cruyff.

Backed by the Amsterdam-based *De Telegraaf*, Holland's biggest-selling newspaper, Cruyff launched an attack on the Ajax way of playing. As an advocate of the club's traditional 4-3-3 system he wondered why Ajax no longer had any decent wingers. He claimed that the club was making a complete fool of itself in Europe.

Picture: www.proshots.nl

Not close...Ajax coach Jol (right) and his assistant Blind

> **This isn't Ajax any more. The club has to start all over again**
>
> *Johan Cruyff*

In his column, Cruyff also slammed the entire club organisation, calling on every coach, board member and director to resign. "This isn't Ajax anymore," he said. "The club has to start all over again like in 1965...only this time the situation is much worse."

Influential positions

Back in 1965, Rinus Michels stepped in at Ajax to build a whole new team, which went on to gain three European Cup titles in the seventies, with Cruyff as his key player. This December, with Cruyff supporters elected to influential positions within the club, chairman Uri Coronel – well aware that his own position could easily be under threat – began to change his mind about his support for Jol.

When Ajax were beaten by Den Haag and AZ in the league, and then eliminated at the group stage of the Champions League, Jol knew that his position would be untenable. After a home draw against NEC Nijmegen, he decided to quit.

Frank De Boer was immediately appointed as caretaker. The 1995 Champions League winner, who played over 400 matches in the famous red-and-white shirt, is a product of the club's youth system and had recently been working as a youth coach at the club. He was also Bert Van Marwijk's assistant during Holland's successful World Cup campaign and, despite having limited coaching experience and being educated by Cruyff's arch-rival Louis Van Gaal, he received the approval of the man who matters.

A former defender, De Boer had a positive start, winning 2-0 away at Milan to secure the club's ticket to the Europa League. While it is fair to say that there was nothing at stake for the Italians, De Boer has managed to put a smile back on the players' faces – and that did not go unnoticed by the board, who gave him a contract until 2014 during the winter break.

Time will tell if De Boer has made a wise career move and whether or not he has been lucky enough to be in the right place at the right time in what could easily be called a snake pit. However, as long as he has the backing of the right people, he will have nothing to worry about. **L**

So tight at the top

Lille shade the honours in Ligue 1's half-term report

FRANCE

HOWARD JOHNSON in Paris

LIGUE 1 SHUT DOWN for its traditional winter break – *trêve* as it is called in France – in December with the championship the most open in years. Rudi Garcia's Lille went into the new year setting the pace at this stage for the first time since 1949, with just five points separating the top 10 sides.

The final games of 2010 proved a perfect microcosm of what has been a truly unpredictable and exciting season.

Lille would have been feeling pretty cheesed off after letting a one-goal lead slip away at home to Saint-Etienne and having to settle for a 1-1 draw on a freezing night in northern France. But their mood was improved considerably by the fact that all the chasing pack – Paris Saint-Germain, Rennes, Lyon and Marseille – failed to win, leaving Lille undisputed leaders with a game in hand over their nearest rivals.

"We've had a magnificent first half of the season," said Garcia after top scorer Moussa Sow notched his 14th goal of the campaign. "But it's too early to draw any conclusions."

Garcia is right about that and even though PSG lost 2-0 at Nancy in their last game before the break, the fact that this was a first defeat in 14 games for Antoine Kombouare's men shows that for once the capital club is proving an outfit to be reckoned with.

Kombouare can rightly claim to have pulled off the coup of the season in luring Brazilian midfielder Nene during the summer. They paid Monaco £5million for the 29-year-old, who has repaid that sum many times over already, chipping in with 13 goals and running the show as if he has been at PSG for years. His two goals against his former club at the Parc des Princes, the first a brilliant long-distance strike and the second a left-footed curler from the edge of the area, gave yet another example of the skills he possesses.

Champions Marseille remain in the hunt despite a miserable run of five games without a win. Still, their last game before the break yielded a 0-0 draw at Brest, who are unbeaten at home this season, prompting OM coach Didier Deschamps to claim: "This was a point gained, given our tiredness and the number of games we've played over the last five months."

> **"Our objective was to ensure survival as soon as possible. We're not there yet"**
>
> *Brest coach Alex Dupont*

Marseille were also boosted by the arrival of France full-back Rod Fanni from Rennes. Signed as cover for the injured Cesar Azpilicueta, who is out for the season, Fanni was allowed to move outside the January transfer window and made his debut in a 1-1 home draw with Lyon.

Unbeaten run

France's other big hitter, Lyon, also finished the first half of the campaign with a draw, 1-1 at home to Auxerre. While not the result boss Claude Puel would have wanted with which to sign off the year, it did at least extend Lyon's unbeaten league run to 12 games.

After the traumas Puel suffered earlier in the season, with supporters staging sit-ins and demanding his head, it has to be regarded as real progress that his side are currently in fourth place, a point behind Lille.

And let us not forget Rennes in all this. Armed with the meanest defence in Ligue 1 – they have conceded just 12 goals in their 19 games – Frederic Antonetti's side fully merit their third-place slot at the turn. True, the attack is nothing to write home about, with just 18 goals so far, but the former Nice boss has undeniably done a grand job since arriving in the north in 2009.

At the other end, Arles-Avignon already look doomed. With just eight points they are rooted to the bottom, eight points adrift of Lens, who replaced Jean-Guy Wallemme with Romanian coach Laszlo Boloni during the break. Caen occupy the third relegation spot, meaning two of the three clubs promoted from Ligue 2 last season are flirting with a swift return.

The exception is Brest, who continue to defy all expectations in a more-than-comfortable seventh place. Much of the credit has to go to coach Alex Dupont, who has created a team in which the whole is clearly much greater than the sum of their parts.

"Our objective was to ensure survival as soon as possible," says Dupont. "We're not there yet."

Technically no, but it is hard to see Brest suffering a cataclysmic fall from grace in the second half of the season.

With it all to play for, the chances are the second half of the campaign will prove every bit as enthralling as the first. That can only be good for French football's general health. **L**

Crunch...Lyon striker Jimmy Briand (in white) finds his way blocked by some Auxerre defenders in the 1-1 draw at Stade Gerland

Final result is in sight

The Soca Warriors' battle over their unpaid 2006 World Cup bonuses looks set to be resolved at last

FIVE YEARS AGO, on a sunny afternoon in Dortmund, 10-man World Cup debutants Trinidad & Tobago parked the bus to secure a goalless draw with a Sweden side that included Zlatan Ibrahimovic, Henrik Larsson and Freddie Ljungberg.

And had Cornell Glen not struck the bar for the Soca Warriors – soca is an up-tempo offshoot of the country's indigenous calypso music – the minnows might even have claimed a memorable victory.

Yet while this was heady stuff for T&T supporters, the real fireworks came much later.

Now, on February 17 – unless the Jack Warner-steered Trinidad & Tobago Football Federation (TTFF) can conjure up another postponement or a settlement – a courtroom in the capital, Port of Spain, will stage one of the most intriguing sporting briefs of this millennium. It is one that might raise pertinent questions about not only the conduct of the controversial FIFA vice-president Warner and the TTFF, but also about international accounting firm KPMG, two former sports ministers, global giants such as Adidas and eBay, and even FIFA president Sepp Blatter himself.

Thirteen members of the 2006 World Cup squad, led by English attorney Michael Townley, are engaged in a battle over unpaid bonuses with the TTFF and its president, Oliver Camps, after they had originally been promised 50 per cent of the commercial revenue attributed to the country's participation in the tournament...even though they are yet to ascertain what the TTFF banked.

Over the past five years, the players, who were feted as heroes and awarded national medals on their return from Germany, have been chided by Blatter, labelled "greedy mercenaries" by the local football body, verbally abused by senior members of the ruling government, and frustrated by a stream of delays and Warner's public taunts that have obliged them to plead their case in four different court proceedings on two continents.

Legal bills

Trinidad & Tobago, with a population of just over 1.3 million, was the smallest nation to qualify for the World Cup finals. But the 18-month, 20-match qualifying test for Germany now seems paltry in comparison with the five years that the players have had to run up legal bills in taking on the formidable Warner.

Warner – who doubles up as minister of works and transport, and has twice acted as prime minister in the past year – is chairman of the dominant party in the ruling coalition government, a FIFA vice-president and CONCACAF president for nearly two decades, the Caribbean Football Union (CFU) president since 1979 and an almost deafening voice within the local game since 1973.

After a FIFA threat to expel Trinidad & Tobago if the players went to court failed to break their nerve, Warner put forward the London-based Sport Dispute Resolution Panel (SDRP) as arbitrators but then failed to appear in chambers as the players scored a resounding victory in May 2008.

The TTFF have spent the last two years trying unsuccessfully to block the judgement in the local high court while also failing to enact a stay of proceedings. SDRP arbitrator Ian Mill QC labelled aspects of the TTFF's case as "rather unattractive" and "troubling", acting high court judge Devindra Rampersad called it "difficult...to understand", while court of appeal judge Rajendra Narine described the case's chances in the appeal court as "not encouraging".

> "Court of appeal judge Rajendra Narine has described the T&T federation case's chances as 'not encouraging'"

United we stand...Trinidad & Tobago before their group game against England at the 2006 World Cup

In February, Justice Rampersad and players' attorney Townley will rifle though the accounts in court, with the TTFF anxious to pre-empt a legal verdict regarding its books.

Eight World Cup players – including the Ipswich Town pair of Jason Scotland and Carlos Edwards,

State of pay
T&T's 2006 squad

Still to settle	Settled
Atiba Charles	Marvin Andrews
Cornell Glen	Chris Birchall
Cyd Gray	Ian Cox
Shaka Hislop	Carlos Edwards
Kelvin Jack	Clayton Ince
Avery John	Russell Latapy
Stern John	Dennis Lawrence
Kenwyne Jones	Jason Scotland
Collin Samuel	Densill Theobald
Brent Sancho	Dwight Yorke
Aurtis Whitley	
Evans Wise	
Anthony Wolfe	

and former Rangers defender Marvin Andrews – have already accepted US$30,000 each (which is a significant increase from the $873 initially offered in October 2006) after agreeing not to pursue legal action. Meanwhile, former team captain and Manchester United star Dwight Yorke and ex-Porto playmaker Russell Latapy, who is the present national coach, are believed to have negotiated private deals.

It may cost in the region of $200,000 each to quell the remaining 13 players, who include Stoke City striker Kenwyne Jones, former Newcastle United goalkeeper Shaka Hislop and ex-Birmingham City forward Stern John in their ranks.

Powerful...Warner

There is plenty of food for thought. For example, do the sponsors of the Trinidad & Tobago team – such as Adidas, eBay and local beer company Carib – bear any responsibility when the financial details of their deals are manipulated at will by the likes of Warner?

The TTFF itself claimed to have signed a $11.5million deal with Adidas in December 2005, only to later tell the players and the public that the deal was worth less than $154,000. Some sponsorship deals have even vanished off the revenue sheet altogether.

Another question up for debate is whether KPMG should shoulder liability for approving its client's books when tens of millions of dollars appear unaccounted for.

How can the TTFF look at presumably the same spreadsheet and declare a profit of $43,688 when the players were not represented; $147,067 after the players hired a lawyer; and then more than 30 times that figure when they appeared before a judge?

And all of these figures are still well short of the $26.8million that the previous government claimed went to the football body in 2006 from local public and private-sector funding.

How could the TTFF claim to have been bankrupt in March 2007, after such a lucrative year, and unable to participate in a FIFA-approved tournament without investigation from the global body?

And how could successive sports ministers allow millions of state funds to be channelled into a body without proper audit or accountability?

Then there is Warner's conduct throughout, which speaks volumes about the hypocrisy and deceit permitted implicitly by FIFA.

The Soca Warriors started their 2006 World Cup qualifying campaign in Santo Domingo with a 2-0 win over the Dominican Republic, only to return to their hotel to discover that their money and personal belongings had been stolen.

Seven years on, they remain as focused as ever on a successful conclusion to their 2006 crusade – and they clearly have no intention of being robbed again. **L**

Coaching confusion

The identity of the Indian Ocean island's new boss is finally unravelled

SEYCHELLES

STEVE MENARY

THE SEVENTH Indian Ocean Games in August will mark the competitive debut for the hosts' new coach. But despite the claims of FIFA and the Confederation of African Football, former Manchester City and Blackburn Rovers defender Andy Morrison will not be leading the Seychelles.

Currently assistant manager at English non-league side Northwich Victoria, Morrison knew nothing about the announcement of his "appointment" on the two footballing bodies' official websites until he was contacted by *World Soccer*.

Instead, the post was taken by Andy Amers-Morrison, who runs a football academy for underprivileged children in west London called Samba Street Soccer. Mind you, a simple, cursory check might have helped FIFA and CAF to distinguish the pair...seeing as one is Scottish and white, while the other is from Yorkshire and black.

Some locals claim that the Seychelles Football Federation (SFF) was duped by Amers-Morrison, who claims to have had trials at Manchester City, Plymouth Argyle and Huddersfield Town.

"That's three clubs that I've played for," laughs the Northwich-based Morrison. "Well, good luck to him. He's warmer than I am."

However, SFF technical director Ulric Mathiot denies that his organisation was tricked and Amers-Morrison says that he got the job after attending a children's training session while on holiday in the Seychelles. When the regular coach failed to show, he took charge.

"The boys enjoyed the session so much within a week I found myself in front of Mr [Suketu] Patel [the SFF chairman]," says Amers-Morrison. "Before my holiday was over I had signed a two-year contract, starting August 2010, as first-team head coach."

Location, location...Amers-Morrison oversees a Samba Street Soccer session in west London

"This is something I've always wanted to do"

Kevin Betsy decides the time is right to accept a Seychelles call-up

The SFF had originally given the job to Richard Holmund on a two-year contract in August 2009, only for the Swede to quit that Christmas. He was then replaced by local man Cliff Nolin, who worked with temporary coaches Jaan Mak from Sweden and German Michael Nees.

Main championship

But it is Amers-Morrison who will now lead the island at the multi-sport Games, in which the football tournament is the main championship for the Seychelles, Comoros, Madagascar, Mauritius, Mayotte and Reunion.

The Seychelles have never won the Indian Ocean Games but they did reach the Final when it was first staged in 1979, losing to Reunion, who they face this year in a group also containing Mauritius.

Amers-Morrison is keen to put out his strongest possible side and he will be helped by the recent decision of midfielder Kevin Betsy to accept a call-up – a decade after first being asked.

The 32-year-old, once of Fulham but who now plays for English fourth-tier side Wycombe Wanderers, will be the first former Premier League player to play for the country, who are 195th in FIFA's rankings.

"My father was captain of the Seychelles team in the 1970s and I was born there but moved away when I was two," says Betsy.

"I was asked a few times in the past but it was always the wrong time. I was trying to establish myself and games were at the wrong time for the English season.

"I've been over there many times on holidays and done coaching and this is something that I've always wanted to do." L

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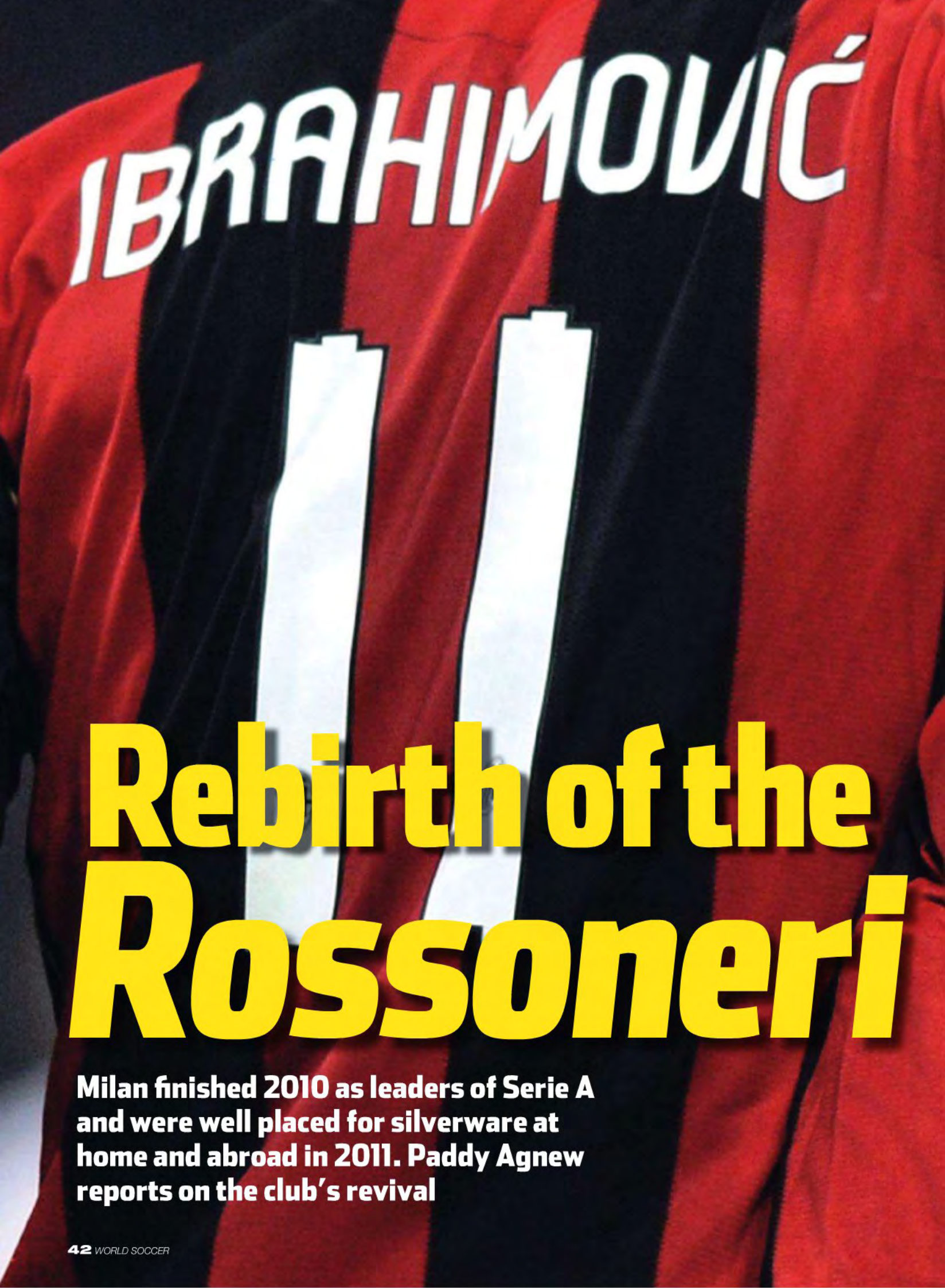


Rebirth of the *Rossoneri*

Milan finished 2010 as leaders of Serie A and were well placed for silverware at home and abroad in 2011. Paddy Agnew reports on the club's revival

FOR THEIR "office" party this Christmas, Serie A leaders Milan opted for a night at the theatre: namely a specially crafted Christmas musical at the city's Teatro Nuovo. Before the show began, the club's managing director Adriano Galliani summoned coach Massimiliano Allegri and captain Massimo Ambrosini on to the stage.

Galliano recalled how three years ago at the Milan Christmas party he had called on the then coach and captain – Carlo Ancelotti and Paolo Maldini – to promise that the club would go on to win something that season. With that happy precedent in mind – after all, Milan went on to beat Liverpool 2-1 in that year's

Champions League Final in Athens – Galliani staged a repeat act, calling on Allegri and Ambrosini to promise him a trophy in 2011.

With all due respect, both to that precedent and even more importantly to Milan's remarkable track record (seven European Cup/Champions League titles to their credit put them second only to Real Madrid on the all time winners' list), the jury is still very much out on whether the current team is good enough to triumph either at home or abroad.

In theory, everything is hunky dory. Milan, who last won Serie A back in 2004, ended the year not only top of the table, three points clear of Napoli and Lazio, but they are also still on course in the Champions League, where they meet Tottenham Hotspur in the spring's knockout round of 16. Clearly, everything is still to play for.

Work in progress

However, two home defeats at the end of the year, 2-0 by Ajax in the Champions League and 1-0 at the hands of Roma in Serie A, served as reminders that this current Milan are still very much a work in progress.

> **"Comparisons with my team just at the moment seem out of place"**
>
> *Marco Van Basten, part of the great Milan side of the late 1980s*

While the defeat by Ajax in the last group game probably owed much to the fact that Milan went into that tie having already qualified for the next stage, the Roma result was much more painful and a lot harder to explain. Furthermore, those setbacks also rekindled bitter memories of October at the Bernabeu, when Jose Mourinho's Real Madrid humiliated Milan with an emphatic 2-0 Champions League group victory.

Speaking just a couple of days before the loss to Roma, no less a judge than Marco Van Basten had indicated that this Milan had some

Fire power...new boys Boateng (left), Ibrahimovic (centre) and Robinho

THE CASSANO GAMBLE

ANOTHER important chapter in the never dull life and times of ex-Bari, ex-Roma, ex-Real Madrid and now ex-Sampdoria striker Antonio Cassano unfolded in January with the news that Italian football's enfant terrible had joined Milan. The intriguing move is the direct result of the dramatic breakdown in relations between Cassano and Sampdoria owner Riccardo Garrone.

The 28-year-old Cassano first infuriated Garrone in October in an encounter at the club's Bogliasco training centre, near Genoa, by declining a personal favour to Garrone to turn up for a supporters' night. He then made matters a great deal worse by engaging in a lively, non-parliamentary dialogue with Garrone, saying, among other things, that he had no intention of turning up at that "shithouse of a hotel... for that asshole of a prize". Hardly surprisingly Cassano did not play for Sampdoria after that.

Furthermore, Sampdoria and Garrone appealed to the Football Federation's Arbitration Committee to have the player's contract rescinded and his £4.5million pay packet frozen. In early December, the Federation ruled that Cassano's contract had to be respected, though it did allow the club to reduce it by 50 per cent. It also concluded that, while Cassano's behaviour appeared to merit the decision of his contract, the player's behaviour was an "isolated incident...a sort of moment of madness".

All of which, translated into footballspeak, meant that Cassano was back on the market since clearly he had come to the end of his Sampdoria road. Milan, reportedly much encouraged by their owner and Italian prime minister Silvio Berlusconi, were the first to jump in for him. Managing director Adriano Galliani had to summon all his diplomatic skills to overcome a clause in Cassano's transfer from Real Madrid to Sampdoria three years ago, stating that if the "bad boy" made another big money move, then Real were due £4.2m. In the end, Sampdoria, Milan and Cassano himself agreed to split the money between them so that the player would be free to move to the San Siro on a three-year contract worth an annual £2.3m after tax.

Stand by for more fireworks from Cassano, albeit in a different shirt.

At odds with Sampdoria...Cassano

Theatre of resurgence...the San Siro begins to fill up for a Champions League tie

way to go before it could be compared to the Arrigo Sacchi-coached side in which he starred in the late 1980s, telling *Gazzetta dello Sport*: "Comparisons with my team just at the moment seem out of place. This Milan is doing some nice things but it doesn't seem to me that they are playing really good football.

"For now, they are concerned just with winning games and that is fair enough. When they have the results in the bank, then they can think of playing better."

On the button

Van Basten's analysis seems right on the button. As of now, Milan still have to deposit a number of important results in the bank. For a start, in the head-to-head count with their domestic rivals, they are only on a 50-50 rating. While they have beaten Internazionale and Napoli away, they have also lost at home to

Down to earth...Gattuso takes a tumble after a challenge from Genoa's Rafinha as Houssine Kharja tries to cover

Juventus and Roma, while drawing away with Lazio. This hardly seems like the sort of irresistible charge that marked the Milan of the late 1980s, or indeed the Inter of more recent seasons in Italian soccer.

However, there are a number of considerations which entitle *Rossoneri* fans to keep on dreaming. For a start, this is a different Milan with a new boss in ex-Cagliari coach, Allegri, and with new players such as Swedish striker Zlatan Ibrahimovic, Ghana's Kevin-Prince Boateng and Brazilian star Robinho, not to mention the most recent and arguably most flamboyant acquisition in former Sampdoria enfant terrible Antonio Cassano.

> **"Ibrahimovic was never a modern player in the way he is now"**
>
> *Ex-Milan coach ArrigoS acchi*

When Milan picked up successive league wins against Brescia and Bologna in December, Galliani pointed out with obvious satisfaction that all three of his new boys this season – Ibrahimovic, Boateng and Robinho – had got on the scoresheet in both games.

By Christmas the trio had scored a combined total of 17 Serie A goals. If Cassano manages to blend in, then Milan will clearly have some awesome firepower up front, even if Cassano is cup-tied for the Champions League since he has already played in this season's tournament with Sampdoria. At least his arrival should go some way to compensating for the loss of Ronaldinho, who is on his way out of Milan and heading home to Brazil to join Gremio. Furthermore, injured compatriot Alexandre Pato is currently something of a mystery, having travelled to North Carolina just before Christmas in order to further investigate his recurring muscular problems.

Important anchor

Amid all the departures and arrivals, the new-look Milan does appear to have found one important anchor for its future battles, with many

MOVERS AND SHAKERS The key figures at Milan

SILVIO BERLUSCONI
Club owner since 1986 and currently in his third spell as Italian prime minister. Officially, Berlusconi has stepped down from his position as club president to concentrate on his prime ministerial duties, but no major decision at the club is taken without his approval.

ADRIANO GALLIANI
CEO and the man to whom Berlusconi delegates the running of the club in his absence. Joined Milan in 1986 having previously been a senior executive within Berlusconi's Mediaset organisation.

ARIEDO BRAIDA
Influential Berlusconi loyalist who holds the title of sports director.

PAOLO BERLUSCONI
Brother of the club owner who holds the (largely ceremonial) position of club vice-president.

BARBARA BERLUSCONI
Berlusconi's daughter from his second marriage. Holds no formal position but has been increasingly visible at the club in recent months.

UMBERTO GANDINI
The public face of the club at UEFA club competition draws, but a purely administrative figure behind the scenes.

MASSIMILIANO ALLEGRI
A somewhat surprise choice as coach last summer when appointed as successor to Leonardo, having achieved notable success with Cagliari.

MAURO TASSOTTI
Former club defender and now assistant coach to Allegri. Previously held the same post under Carlo Ancelotti and has been an important figure in providing continuity.

Administrator...Galliani

Final say...Silvio Berlusconi

Ceremonial...Paolo Berlusconi

Surprise choice...Allegri

Presence...Barbara Berlusconi

Continuity...Tassotti

observers arguing that the obvious key to the team's success so far this season has been the contribution made by Ibrahimovic.

Former Milan coach Sacchi suggests that, after a disappointing season with Barcelona, Ibrahimovic has returned to Italian soccer with renewed motivation. He claims that while the Swede was a regular match-winner for Inter two and three seasons ago, the current Ibrahimovic is even better. In his *Gazzetta dello Sport* column, Sacchi recently wrote: "The Inter Ibrahimovic was obviously a key player but he was never a modern player in the way he is now.

"Along with Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo, he is currently among the best players around. Now, he helps out both in attack and defence, not only making the most of his physical strength and technical skill but also putting himself about for his team-mates."

Heading to the sun

For the second half of the season, Milan and Allegri will hope to recuperate a number of injured players, including not only Pato but also experienced figures such as midfielder Andrea Pirlo, and defenders Gianluca Zambrotta and Brazilian Thiago Silva. This year, as often in the past, Milan opted to make the most of the nearly three-week long Italian winter break by heading to the sun in Dubai immediately after Christmas, hoping that the heat will help cure ailing limbs.

Milan fans will be hoping, too, that Allegri and Ambrosini honour their Christmas party promise and bring home some silverware.

"We cannot choose [between the Champions League and Serie A]," says Ambrosini. "With the Champions League, you never know. You get one game wrong and you're out, even if you are the favourite. We'll be trying for everything."

As for the Champions League draw, there is no doubt that Milan feel it could have been a lot worse since, as runners-up in their group, they could have ended up with Barcelona, Chelsea or Manchester United, and Allegri says: "Obviously, nothing is easy in the Champions League but, in all honesty, I think the draw went well for us.

"Tottenham is a much less intimidating prospect than a side like Barcelona...even if in their games against Inter, Tottenham showed themselves to be a useful team."

All things considered, 2011 promises to be quite a year for the *Rossoneri*. **L**

GOALKEEPERS

32 Christian ABBIATI

08.07.77

In his second spell with the club after previously serving them from 1998 to 2005. Played for Juventus, Torino and Atletico Madrid before returning to the San Siro in 2008. Current first choice.

1 Marco AMELIA

02.04.82

Signed from Genoa at the start of the season. Started as a striker in the Roma youth team before going between the posts. His striking skills came in handy when he scored from a header for previous club Livorno in a UEFA Cup tie against Partizan Belgrade in November 2006.

30 Flavio ROMA

21.06.74

Appropriately born in Rome but first signed for his namesake's rivals Lazio. Drifted from Serie C1 to Serie A with a number of clubs before making a name for himself with Monaco. Moved to Milan last season.

DEFENDERS

77 Luca ANTONINI

04.08.82

Converted winger from his youth-team days at the club, now plays at full-back. Left Milan in 2001 and played for various smaller clubs in Serie A and Serie B before returning to the San Siro in 2008.

25 Daniele BONERA

31.05.81

Played for Brescia and Parma before joining Milan in 2006. Can play in central defence or right-back. Lacked consistency last season under Leonardo, but is getting more game time this campaign.

18 Marek JANKULOVSKI

09.05.77

Regular performer for the last couple of seasons, but the Czech defender now finds himself on the bench more times than he is on the pitch.

MIDFIELDERS

20 Ignazio ABATE

12.11.86

Began his career at Milan in the youth team before being loaned out to a number of Italian clubs. Joined Empoli and later Torino, before returning to the San Siro in 2009. Can play either right midfield or at right-back. See Talent Scout, page 67.

23. Massimo AMBROSINI

29.05.77

Combative central midfielder and a decent header of the ball, he is captain of the *Rossoneri* and the most decorated player in the Milan squad, having won 10 trophies with the club since 1995.

27 Kevin-Prince BOATENG

06.03.87

A surprise summer signing after playing an influential role for Ghana at the World Cup. Born in Berlin, he played for Hertha in the Bundesliga before making a name for himself with Tottenham Hotspur and Portsmouth in England. His combination of power and pace on the flanks have impressed Allegri.

FORWARDS

99 Antonio CASSANO

12.07.82

Once the most expensive teenager in Italian football when joining Roma from Bari in 2001, he moved on to Real Madrid, where he fell out with Fabio Capello, but revived his career at Sampdoria, earning a recall to the national side late last year.

11 Zlatan IBRAHIMOVIC

03.10.81

Played for Malmo, Ajax and Juventus before joining Inter in 2006. Spent last season at Barcelona, then loaned in the summer to Milan who have an option to buy him. Scored in the 1-0 win against Inter this term. Has won a league title in each of the past seven seasons.

9 Filippo INZAGHI

09.08.73

Poacher whose two goals in this season's Champions League match at home to Real Madrid elevated him to joint-top scorer in European club competition. Out for the rest of the season with a serious knee injury, there are doubts whether he will resume his career.

The men aiming to wrest back power from the black and blue half of the city

COACH

Massimiliano ALLEGRI

11.08.67

Replaced Leonardo in June 2010 and has steered Milan to the top of Serie A and the Champions League knockout stage. Limited experience of the big time, but did well at Cagliari on a limited budget.

13 Alessandro NESTA

19.03.76

Experienced defender who has been at the club since 2002, having previously spent nine seasons at Lazio. Has won eight trophies with Milan including two Champions League titles and one scudetto. Still regarded as one of the best central defenders in Italy.

15 Sokratis PAPASTATHOPOULOS

09.06.88

Consistent performer since signing in 2009, following one season with Genoa. Before that played for AEK Athens in his home country.

33 THIAGO SILVA

22.09.84

Born in Brazil and made a name for himself with Fluminense before joining Milan at the start of last season. Plays in the centre of defence.

76 Mario YEPES

13.01.76

Captain of Colombia who arrived from Chievo last summer. Plays in central defence and was signed as a replacement for departing 38-year-old stalwart Giuseppe Favalli, but has struggled to get much game time so far.

19 Gianluca ZAMBROTTA

19.02.77

Now in his third season with the club, he can play in either full-back position. Won two scudettos at Juventus before playing two seasons for Barcelona.

16 Mathieu FLAMINI

07.03.84

After four seasons with Arsenal, joined Milan in the summer of 2008. Although a defensive midfielder, he played at right-back for a while under Leonardo, but now tends to play in his more familiar role. Yet to win a trophy with the *Rossoneri*.

8 Gennaro GATTUSO

09.01.78

Combative and hard-tackling central midfielder, has played more than 300 games for the club he joined in 1999. Was once sent off after hitting current team-mate Zlatan Ibrahimovic in the back of the head when the Swede was playing for Ajax against Milan in the Champions League in 2003.

21 Andrea PIRLO

19.05.79

Began his career with Brescia and is now in his 17th season in Italian football and his 10th at Milan. Was converted by Carlo Ancelotti from an attacking midfielder into a deeper playmaking role where his passing is showcased. Dead-ball specialist.

10 Clarence SEEDORF

01.04.76

Dutchman who joined Milan from neighbours Internazionale in 2002. One of the most decorated players in Europe, he is the only player to have won the Champions League with three different clubs: Ajax (1995), Real Madrid (1998) and Milan (2003 and 2007).

7 Alexandre PATO

02.09.89

Brazil striker who has scored virtually a goal every other game since joining Milan in January 2008. Was voted Serie A young footballer of the year in 2009. Full name Alexandre Rodrigues da Silva, his nickname "Pato" translates literally as "duck". Troubled by injuries of late.

70 ROBINHO

25.01.84

Talented winger/striker who has found it hard to settle outside his native Brazil. Started at Santos before playing for Real Madrid and Manchester City. On loan at his first club last season, he signed a four-year deal with Milan in August. Has made a decent start to life in Serie A.

Ten titles...skipper Ambrosini

Sitting deep:
Serie A's midfield default mode

How to beat Milan

Jonathan Wilson looks at why teams who play with wide men have troubled the Italian league leaders this season

Crowded house...Internazionale's Wesley Sneijder negotiates a path through Milan's deep-lying midfielders Ambrosini and Gattuso at the San Siro

MILAN MAY HAVE GONE into the winter break three points clear of the pack in Serie A, but the *scudetto* is far from theirs. This has been an odd season in Italy, stripped of its pantomime villain by the departure of Jose Mourinho to Real Madrid, and stripped of its outstanding team largely for the same reason, though perhaps even the "Special One" would have struggled to lift Internazionale again after the epic and emotionally exhausting success of the last campaign.

The football in Serie A has been strangely tentative, the goals-per-game average of 2.28 up to Christmas was the lowest among Europe's major leagues by some way, and 0.33 lower than last season's ratio.

Milan's recent games against their major rivals perhaps give some indication why. In the final month before the winter break, they played both Inter and Roma. They won the former 1-0 and lost the latter game by the same scoreline, with both matches featuring two sides playing 4-3-1-2.

With a genuine playmaker and other midfielders breaking from deep, the system can be very attacking. But the tendency in Italy this season has been for the three midfielders all to sit deep, which requires players noted for their energy and combativeness rather than grace and creativity. Against Inter, Massimiliano Allegri fielded Massimo Ambrosini as the anchor in front of the back four, with Mathieu Flamini and Gennaro Gattuso flanking him. Inter met them with Dejan Stankovic as the anchor, with Joel Obi and Javier Zanetti either side.

> **"Tottenham have pace on both flanks in Lennon and Bale, who would comfortably outstrip Abate and Zambrotta in a straight race"**

The result was a game that quickly became a midfield battle in which Milan took the initiative largely because their full-backs, Ignazio Abate and Gianluca Zambrotta, were far more comfortable pushing forwards than Inter's pairing of Ivan Cordoba and Cristian Chivu. That gave Milan extra bodies in midfield and attacking width. They took advantage, though, largely because Inter were so bizarrely

vulnerable to simple balls over the top for Zlatan Ibrahimovic to chase. The penalty from which Ibrahimovic scored the only goal came from such a move, as he got goal side of Marco Matterazzi, who chopped him down.

Inter, clearly, weren't helped by the absence of Maicon, who does provide that width from deep, and Milan found themselves similarly hamstrung when Zambrotta missed out on the Roma game and was replaced by Luca Antonini. It wasn't that Roma's full-backs, John Arne Riise and Nicolas Burdisso, offered much in the way of attacking intent, as that Milan had next to nothing in the way of width.

Roma at least had Jeremy Menez pulling right from his *trequartista* role, and it was from one of those drifts that he created the only goal for Marco Borriello – whereas Kevin-Prince Boateng, operating behind Milan's front two, was far more focused on arriving late in the box. He remains a player who prefers the ball in front of him rather than receiving it with his back to goal, which means he is not an ideal link between midfield and attack. Chelsea's brief experiment last season with Frank Lampard at the point of a midfield diamond was discontinued for similar reasons.

Without full-backs pushing forward, Roma's game at the San Siro became almost entirely bogged down in a battle of two prosaic midfields, something not helped when Andrea Pirlo went off to be replaced by an out-of-sorts Clarence Seedorf.

Ibrahimovic and Robinho, of course, remain a strike partnership of terrifying possibility, but the lack of pace or guile in midfield means that it rarely has the chance to show its full potential. To an extent, Milan have prospered in Serie A because so many other sides play without width. When they faced Juventus, who play a 4-4-2 with genuine wide players, they lost 2-1, despite the absence of Milos Krasic. Sampdoria, another 4-4-2 side, similarly troubled them and were the only team to take a point off Milan in the eight games between the Juventus and Roma defeats.

Three other teams have taken points off Milan this season, and while those games were early in the season – when Milan were still playing 4-3-3 – it is surely significant that Cesena, Lazio and Catania all play with either wide forwards or advanced wide midfielders.

That, of course, is excellent news for Tottenham Hotspur, who face Milan in the last 16 of the Champions League. They have been thrilling in Europe this season, with pace and width on both flanks through Gareth Bale and Aaron Lennon, both of whom would comfortably outstrip Zambrotta and Abate in a straight foot race. That leaves the full-backs with a dilemma: sit deep so there is no space behind them to be attacked, or push on and try to force Bale and Lennon back.

Normally when 4-4-2 meets 4-3-1-2, the issue is whether the team playing 4-4-2 can win enough possession to feed the wide men, when it is a man light in the centre of midfield. But Tottenham have such attacking full-backs in Alan Hutton and Benoit Assou-Ekotto that both, with no wide forward to worry about, can push on to help out in midfield.

That in turn risks leaving Ibrahimovic and Robinho two on two against whichever Spurs centre-backs happen to be fit that week, with the additional danger of Milan's *trequartista* – be that Boateng or Seedorf – floating on the edge of the midfield skirmish. But Harry Redknapp, the Spurs manager, would probably consider that a risk worth taking if the pay-off is to isolate Bale or Lennon against Abate or Zambrotta. And he also has the option of playing Rafael Van der Vaart deep off a front man, to add an additional presence to that central midfield area.

Tottenham, of course – even if they do find themselves overmanned – have such superior pace throughout the side that they stand a reasonable chance of recovering. Tactically, Milan probably couldn't have drawn a worse opponent. **L**

Pace to burn... Bale

Flashpoint...Ibrahimovic is brought down by Materazzi for Milan's decisive penalty

October 30, 2010, Italian Serie A: Milan 1 Juventus 2

Milan vs Juventus

December 18, 2010, Italian Serie A: Milan 0 Roma 1

Milan vs Roma

Typical line-up

Tottenham Hotspur

FACE TO FACE

Interviews with football's biggest names

Ryan Giggs

I remember when I first came into the dressing room and saw the likes of Steve Bruce, Bryan Robson and Mark Hughes – I was in awe. Now, I'm the old guy!

Ryan Giggs

The Manchester United and Wales winger on the changing face of the game

The elder **statesman**

THIS IS YOUR 20th year in the Premier League. How has English football changed in that time?
I think the level of preparation has improved out of sight. Footballers now know how to look after themselves, what to eat, what not to drink, all that kind of stuff. The game is so quick these days that you have to be in top physical condition otherwise you can't perform and will pick up injuries. That's probably the biggest change.

One thing that hasn't changed is Alex Ferguson's reign at Old Trafford. How has his management style evolved?
He's probably a bit mellower than he was. You don't get as much of what people call the "hairdryer" treatment, but at the same time every single person at the club knows what is expected of them. The discipline is still there but in a different way.

He was supposed to retire nine years ago but decided against it. Do you think – as some people suggest – he'll call it a day if you win the title or the Champions League this season?
I don't honestly know. All I can say is I haven't noticed any signs of him slowing down! The great thing about the manager is his ability to keep going, keep rebuilding teams and keep bringing success to the club. He understands what Manchester United stands for and puts all his energies into ensuring those expectations are met. Age doesn't come into it when you have that kind of desire.

What about you? Could this be your final season?
I'm obviously asked this a lot and I can honestly say I haven't made a decision. It's quite simple really: if I am doing myself and United justice, and the manager wants me to continue, I'll play for another season. If not, both the manager and I are close enough to have a chat and call it a day. At the moment things are going fine, so we'll see how things stand at the end of the season.

How has your style of play changed as you've progressed through your 30s?
I can't bomb up and down the wing like I used to! I think my experience has taught me to use the ball better, how to pick a pass and when to find the space. I've been lucky with injuries so I can still get about the pitch. And I still love playing football, that hasn't changed a bit.

You've won 11 titles, two Champions Leagues, four FA Cups and four League Cups. What's left to motivate you?
I'm not daft, I know that I'm coming to the end of my career. I can't keep going forever, obviously, so every season becomes more and more precious. You are a long time retired and I'm hungry to win as much as I can in the time I've got left. Also pulling on the United shirt is as much of an honour as it ever was.

What's your role in the United dressing room?
I don't have a defined role but obviously with my experience I'm there for the younger lads if they need me. I remember when I first came into the dressing room and saw the likes of Steve Bruce, Bryan Robson and Mark Hughes – I was in awe of them. It's weird to think all these years later I've become the old guy!

How does this United team compare to the greats of yesteryear?
Every side is different so it's unfair to compare. We've had some incredible footballers, some incredible teams and then had to rebuild. The aim is to try to emulate those top sides. Sir Alex is creating another great group of players with some top young talent and more experienced ones who can contribute when needed. I think we're in pretty good shape, to be honest.

What do you make of all the big spending antics going on at Manchester City. Is it bad for football?
No, I wouldn't say that. The City fans must be in dreamland and good luck to them. In a short time they've seen all these expensive players come into the club – probably something they wouldn't have expected in their lifetimes. Does it intensify the rivalry between City and United? I suppose so because now City are expected to challenge for the title. They've done well so far but the key will come in the title run-in where you need consistency week in, week out. We'll have to see how they get on.

Finally, what next for Ryan Giggs after you hang up your boots?
I'm sure there will be a big gap in my life after 20 or so years doing the same thing. I'm taking my coaching badges so that may be a route for me but I just want to focus on playing for now. I know it's a cliché, but it really is one game at a time for me these days.

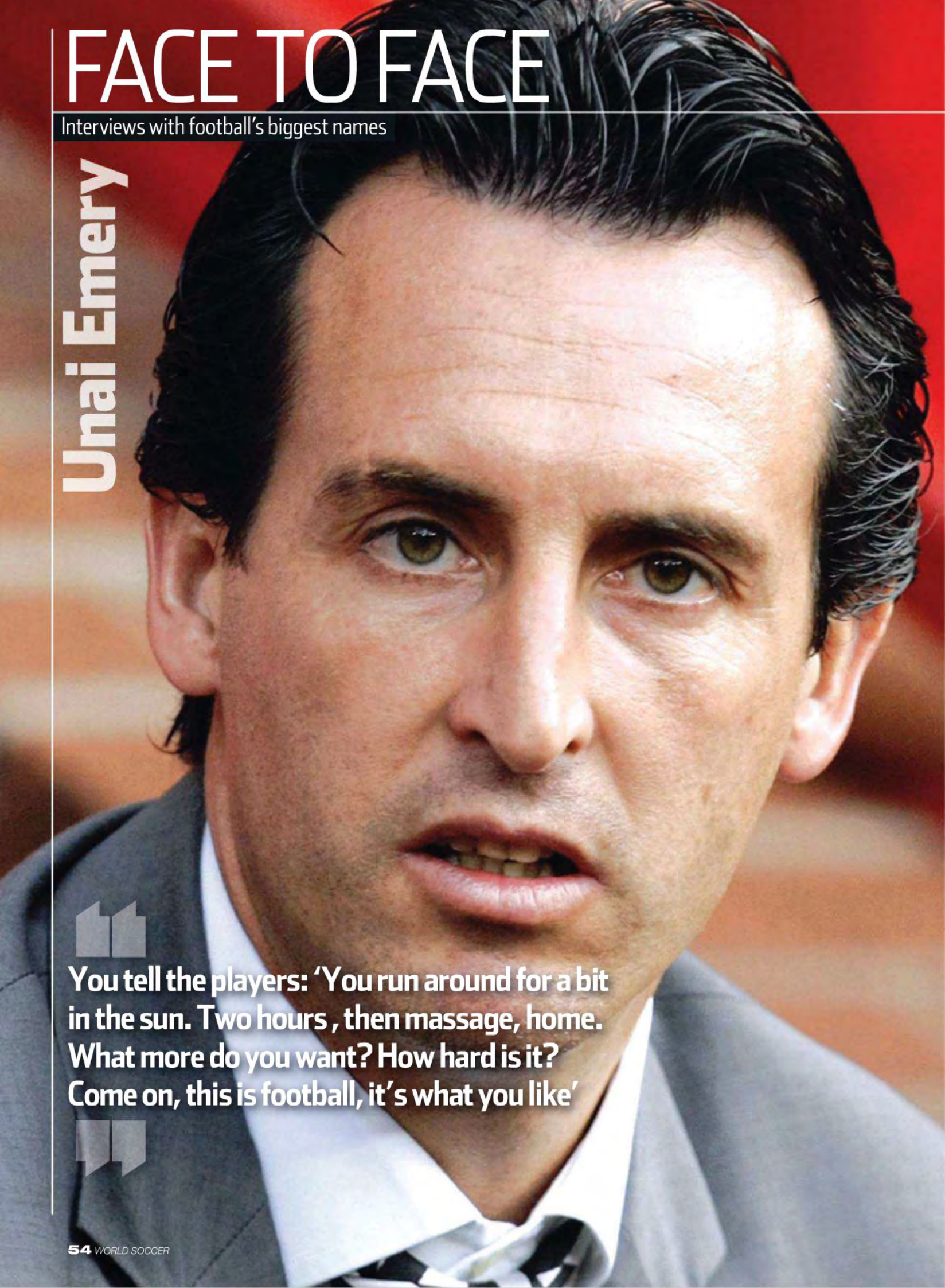
Interview by Frank Tennyson

Senior service...Ferguson and Giggs discuss tactics

FACE TO FACE

Interviews with football's biggest names

Unai Emery



You tell the players: 'You run around for a bit in the sun. Two hours , then massage, home. What more do you want? How hard is it? Come on, this is football, it's what you like'

Unai Emery

Valencia's coach is a bundle of energy, leaping up and down, shouting instructions, hands moving furiously. Off the pitch he is much the same...

Chess master

YOU STARTED OUT as coach at Lorca in Spain's third tier, at least in part because of a knee injury that brought your playing career to an end. But were you always a coach, even when you were still a player?

Yes. I took my coaching badges when I was still playing because I wanted to continue in the game. Coaching was inside me. I was always learning as a player, storing up information, taking notes, analysing. Going into coaching reflected my dedication to football. I love my profession and as a player I wanted to know everything. I watched as many games as I could. I used to play a lot of chess and there's an element of that too. I love the strategy, the sense of planning and out-thinking an opponent. Corners, free kicks, set plays...I also have a very active character. As a coach, participating in everything fulfils that need to be active, to feel like you're creating something.

But is chess really comparable to football? Isn't football far too dynamic? Players don't only move in specific ways...

The greatest control is exercised by the footballers, they have the talent, but you can teach them things and there are lots of games that are decided by strategy. If you know how to make the talent of the players work, then you can make them better players. They are the tools but you can use them in the correct way. If you have Leo Messi, half of the job is done. But there's still the other half. You can mechanise certain things, despite the dynamism of the game: where you want to defend, how you want to defend, are you going to be more aggressive, less aggressive...

Do those decisions depend on the opponent?

Not always. We have our own identity, but there are factors. Do you want to isolate this player and attack him? Which player joins an attack? Does the pivot wait or go? Do four go up or six? That's the coach's job. If you win the ball higher up the pitch, you're closer to attack and that's the key. You have to be aware of what you're trying to do – get the ball back – but also why. If you defend higher you might create more danger for yourself but you create more for opponents too. Why are you defending? Where's the balance? Do you win the ball to defend yourself? Or do you win the ball as a prelude to playing? Is winning the ball the first chain in your attacks? For example, many Italian teams don't try to win the ball, they're happy to recover possession with the other team's attack coming to an end. They're not trying to get it off you, they're just trying to stop you doing anything with it. They wait for the other team to give them the ball, rather than looking to go and get it off them. In England, by contrast, they attack the ball a lot more, they seek it.

Are those decisions based on your identity or the players' identity?

You have to adapt to the players – more you to them than them to you. I am rebuilding Valencia after the changes in the summer [David Villa and David Silva both left]. There's an intermediate point. Last year we played with great personality, exactly the way I wanted. Now we're finding that again. We were complete, now we pressure a little deeper, we're a little more direct. But I like teams that play the ball a lot. It's about players. If you have Messi [20 yards outside the area, slightly on the right], he dribbles past five and scores. Great. But if you don't, you have to look at the move again. Messi starts here and the ball ends up in the net, so let's start there and try to end with a goal too. What's the aim? What's the best path? A one-two, a movement from this side, an overlap? There's no Messi, so this guy has to play it inside, he returns it, he overlaps, he crosses. We might not have the one player who can complete that journey, but with three we can.

And you would work through that kind of move?

Yes. Take this situation again. You work on this player going wide to drag this man out, then your other player is ready to go into that space and take advantage. You mechanise that move.

What if a player can't get that move right?

Then you look for another way of doing it. If you have a fast player you know he can look for the ball behind the defender. If not, you know he can't. Just as you know you haven't got Messi, you also know which player can make that original run, who can deliver the cross, who can play what role. That stands from a defensive perspective too. Let's say that the other team has a very tall player, Peter Crouch, say. I'm going to defend him further away and his header is less dangerous there. If I let him hang from my crossbar, he's going to do me much more damage. With Athletic Bilbao's Fernando Llorente, for example, we tried to keep him away from the area. He has a specific quality and it is our job to minimise that.

What kind of material do you use to teach your players at Valencia?

We sit together and watch a video that's 15 or 20 minutes long. I am always watching games, devising strategies. I get a DVD given to me of an hour and a half of footage and I cut it and edit it to make sure that I can present the message clearly. I also give every player information on the player he will be up against. Our right winger gets information on their left-back, our centre-back gets info

Dummy run...Emery prepares for a training session at Valencia's Ciudad Deportiva complex

on their centre-forward, and so on. I individualise preparation in that sense: here's five minutes, watch it at home or in the hotel. Who knows, maybe one or two don't bother, but most are conscious of its value. What harm can come from it? It's five minutes of your time.

It's striking how different that is to some clubs. Rafael Van der Vaart said recently, for instance, that Harry Redknapp doesn't bother with videos at Tottenham Hotspur. He just tells the players to go out and do what they can...
That's the culture. Some good footballers understand. If you've got Van der Vaart and Gareth Bale, maybe you don't need to tell them anything. They're good players. But if you work with them, they can be even better. Maybe Tottenham would be even higher. Who knows? You can do all the preparation and still lose as well, of course, but I am trying to help us win, trying to arm the players with information.

Are some players reluctant to do that?
Some, but they do it. You tell them: "Look, there's a guy goes into his office at 8am and stays there, in front of a computer, until 2pm. Here, it's 20 minutes and then five at home. You run around for a bit in the sun. Two hours, massage, home. What more do you want? How hard is it?" You talk to them: "You go to school, eight hours, maths, physics, history, literacy, geography. Come on, this is football. It's what you like. You play and then you go home."

And they see the benefits when they win, success reinforces the value of that work. But what if you lose?
If you win, they're convinced. And they do have doubts if you go on a bad run. But even if you lose, you can reason with them. You can show them why it went wrong: this is why we lost. You can show them where it went wrong. That works. Sometimes, though, losing is acceptable. You can't beat them all.

Are the coaching principles you've talked about applicable anywhere? A Spanish coach once privately told *World Soccer* that there's so little actual technical or tactical work done in England that with just a small amount of what Spanish coaches do you have an enormous advantage. The approach appears to be very different...
But you have to know where you are. Cesar [goalkeeper Sanchez, who had a spell at Tottenham under Juande Ramos and Redknapp] told me Ramos wanted to change too much too quickly, it was a different mentality and approach, and he moved too fast, he couldn't take the players with him. You have to go step by step. The players didn't accept his change. Redknapp's attitude may well be "meet at four" and that's it. All very relaxed. And the players like it. I saw Martin O'Neill at Aston Villa. There's a Spanish guy who worked with him and he told me that it's very different to Spain, that even just a bit of our tactical work really makes you stand out. O'Neill's approach was "right, let's have a game, bish, bosh, two days off". And that works, English players like that. It's very clearly defined and hard to change – it's just not a style rooted in tactical work. It's ball up there and run, run, run. Up, down, up, down. Loads of effort and spirit. In England, they don't mechanise the game so much, they don't study opponents as much. But they know what they're doing. It's a culture. It's striking too that they have great facilities – fantastic organisation, pitches and equipment – and don't really use them to their fullest.

Different style ...Redknapp

Rafa Benitez was wildly successful at Valencia to start with. Are you cut from the same cloth?
No. Our playing styles are different. But in terms of the work, yes. The hours, the intensity, the fact that we use technology and we're very serious. Lots of strategy, videos. It's professionalism, work, information, documentation. I'm not the kind of coach who says, let's do a few piggy-in-the-middle exercises and get home for lunch. No.

Back to Spain, you mentioned that you can't beat them all – Real Madrid and Barcelona especially. Is it becoming too hard to beat them?
It is very hard. Once Madrid and Barcelona signed the best Spanish players and one or two foreigners; now they sign the very best players from all over the world. We're talking the whole world here. There is not a position in which one of the three or four best in the world is not playing for Madrid or Barcelona.

So, do you feel like giving up?
You know that the most likely outcome is that you'll lose. You have a 20 per cent chance and have to play very, very well and hope you catch them on a day when they are not at their best. Maybe the ball will hit the post rather than going in, maybe they'll lack motivation. Maybe. It's hard to convince the players. You tell them they'll have to suffer to win. If things are going well, they grow but if it goes against you early on, forget it. And every blow feels even more decisive. Against Barcelona we scored first and we went in to the dressing room happy, but then they get one and the disappointment is "argh!" And then another one and "gah!" You deflate. And then the game dies. We'd had our chances but they had gone. At 2-1 we knew we couldn't do it.

Is the psychological side important?
Yes. I read a lot, I try to be their psychologist, but it's not a bad thing at all to bring external psychologists into the club. Thing is, you have to be very clear and very specific as to what their role is. There are lots of psychologists who wouldn't be able to work with a football team: the reality here is different, it's another mind-set, another world. Players are very reluctant to open up to things like that; the psychologist would meet with resistance. You have to reach a player – and that's not easy. You have to build a relationship, you have to know when to get close and when to maintain your distance, and that fluctuates. Closer, closer, closer, back away! Some players are easier than others. I try to be clear and honest. The message to the group has to be the same, but tailored to each player. The optimistic get one message, the pessimistic another. You have to minimise the egos, tell players they're not the best in the world.

Do you single out players for public criticism? Let's say [defender] Bruno makes a mistake. Do you pick on him in front of the team?
I would always talk to Bruno first but if I then

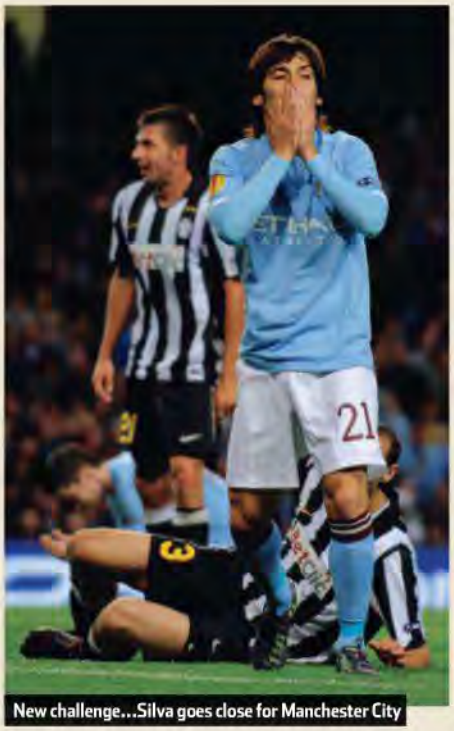
Big-game hunters...Jeremy Mathieu (left) and Jordi Alba try to keep Barcelona's Dani Alves in check

pull him up in front of the rest he knows I am going to do that. I do it very rarely. If a player has been spoken to lots of times and doesn't take any notice then I'll pull him up in front of the whole group. Then he gets angry and I'll say: "I told you, and you ignored me." If I come in at half time and we're losing but we're doing the right thing, I'll be calm: "It's good, relax, keep going." I'll sort out a few details and that's it. But if the effort's not there, if I think they're not running, I'll tell them: "Put your bollocks into it."

What is the worst thing about players' moods?
One thing is the ego: I'm the best, I want to play more, I have teams after me. That happens more here than at my previous clubs Almeria and Lorca. Another thing is anger: I'm not playing, I'm not happy. That happens everywhere.

And what if you just can't get through to a player? What if he becomes a genuine problem?
In extreme cases you have to get rid of them. It hasn't happened too often with me but I guess there have been one or two: "OK, out! I have been working with you for months and I'm not going to do that just so you can do what you want. You don't listen and you don't want to." There can be collateral damage but the players know what I'm trying to do and above all I try to make sure they always know that what I am doing is just. Justice is the same for everyone but every case is different. You need to know that a player maybe has had no education, hasn't got a dad. Maybe he used to be the best, now he isn't. Maybe he was big at his former club, he comes here and now he's not. Maybe he's frustrated because he used to be the leader of the team and he no longer is. You need to know what's behind the irritation.

Is that loss of status a risk for your former players Villa and Silva?
It's happening to them. Silva is playing but there are lots like him. At Barcelona, it's harder for Villa. Here, they took responsibility, now they have to find a different role, a place. That seems to have happened with Zlatan Ibrahimovic. From the outside, I would support Pep Guardiola there. I don't know what happened but that situation is difficult. I have never had a player as complicated as that so I don't know. I would have tried to convince him but in the end maybe his exit was inevitable.


New challenge...Silva goes close for Manchester City

Meanwhile, other players have to step into their shoes here...
Yes, but that process can't be forced, it has to be natural.

Benitez famously complained that he asked for a sofa and they brought him a lamp. How much say do you have on signings? Do you wish coaches in Spain had more authority?
Jose Mourinho's arrival in Madrid has strengthened the position of the coach. He has a good side and a bad one – and the bad overshadows the good – but his arrival is beneficial for coaches. Guardiola has a lot of authority too at Barcelona. Maybe that will help. Coaches have always been at the mercy of the results, whereas in England there is more tranquillity and stability, and more reasonability. In Spain, the coach is consulted and he participates, but in the end it is the club that decides, not the coach.

So, how does a signing happen in Spain?
Well, there's the sporting side, then the economic side and then the president. The two directors – sports and finance – speak to the president and work out the necessities. The technical secretariat looks at players but you can't always get what you want. We wanted Milan Jovanovic, for instance, but he went to Liverpool instead. And Ibrahim Affelay but he has gone to Barcelona. At Almeria and Lorca I had more of a role; here I participate but I am not the key. I see videos and I say what I think, but I tend not to do the scouting. Our staff watched Tino Costa in France, Ricardo Costa in Germany. I can't go and see them all. I do, though, have power of veto. And if there's a player I particularly like, I say so. I wanted Diego Milito two years ago, for instance, but we couldn't afford him and Villa stayed anyway...

The pressure at Valencia is huge...
Three defeats in Spain? Ooof, that's a sackable offence. There's pressure but you get used to it. Some take it badly...and others take it even worse. Taking it well? Impossible. Personally, I am more or less balanced. I know where I am and I know what it's about. I am conscious of what it all is. But I have to be calm. If we win it's great, if we lose it's not, but I know where the middle ground is. There's the media too and they condition your work a bit, but only by 20 per cent and only because you have to speak to them. You know some are against you and you know who they are but you live with that.

If you had to boil it down, what would you say is the key to being a good coach?
Experience. Knowledge. Information. Know things, read, watch, study, learn. You have to try to improve in all of those every day, learn from others. A coach stops being a good coach the day that he stops trying to learn. And there are lots of those around: "I've done it all, I know." No. You can rest, sure, but the day I think I know it all is the day it's over.

Interview by Sid Lowe

SIX OF THE BEST EUROPA LEAGUE

Captain...Koke

Top scorer...Bressan

Pressure...Guti (left)

ARIS SALONIKA (Gre)

THEY speak Spanish at the Kleanthis Vikelidis stadium – or at least Greek with an Iberian lilt. As well as tried-and-tested Argentinian coach Hector Cuper, who is most famous for masterminding Valencia's appearance in back-to-back Champions League Finals in 2000 and 2001, calling the shots from the dugout, Aris also boast Guatemalan front runner Carlos Ruiz and no fewer than six good quality Spanish players, including attacking all-rounder and captain Koke, former Barcelona B winger Javito and fellow flank wizard Toni Calvo.

Aris' great strength is their invulnerability at home. They have not lost on their own patch in Europe for 42 years and maintained that tradition this season with wins against Atletico Madrid and Rosenborg, and a draw with Bayer Leverkusen. However, their best performance of the season came in Madrid, where they beat holders Atletico 3-2 to become the first Greek side to win a competitive game in Spain.

Roberto Mancini's petro-dollar fuelled Manchester City, Aris' opponents in the round of 32, had better beware.

BATE BORISOV (Bls)

NO wonder Viktor Goncharenko is regarded as one of the best up-and-coming team builders in eastern Europe. Not only has he led BATE to three straight Belarus league titles, he has also transformed a once-anonymous provincial side into a competitive force on the continental stage, qualifying the club for the 2008-09 Champions League – the first Belarusian club to do so – and for the last 32 of this season's Europa League, where they face a resurgent Paris Saint-Germain.

At 31, Goncharenko was the youngest coach ever to work in the Champions League and his organisational flair, faith in youth and ability to fire up his players with a handful of well-chosen words paid dividends this autumn, especially in the 2-2 draw away to Ukraine big-hitters Dynamo Kyiv and the 4-1 home dismantling of AZ Alkmaar.

Obsessed with the efficiency and resilience of the team unit, Goncharenko rarely praises individuals, but even he must admit he could not possibly cope without his two leading men: striker Vitali Rodionov, and Brazil-born midfielder Renan Bressan, the Belarus league's top scorer last year with 15 goals.

BESIKTAS (Tur)

IN contrast to their decidedly poor results in the Turkish league – five defeats in the first 17 games have already put paid to their title aspirations and even a top-four finish is by no means a certainty – the Black Eagles have at least given their fans a sliver of satisfaction with their progress in the Europa League, beating CSKA Sofia and Rapid Wien home and away, holding a rampant Porto to a 1-1 draw in Portugal and coming unstuck only once, a 3-1 loss to the Portuguese at home.

Drawn to face Dynamo Kyiv in the round of 32, Besiktas should have little to fear. But with new German coach Bernd Schuster failing to come up with a winning formula and fan discontent growing on the Bosphorus, nothing can be taken for granted.

After spending heavily last summer on such high-profile players as ex-Real Madrid creator Guti, Internazionale winger Ricardo Quaresma, wide man Roberto Hilbert from Stuttgart and Rubin Kazan striker Fatih Tekke, management and supporters expected much, much more. The pressure was eased with a 2-1 derby victory over Galatasaray, but Schuster may be hard-pressed to hold down the lid on this particularly fast-boiling pot.

SURPRISES

Nick Bidwell selects the teams that have made the most dramatic impact on this season's competition

On the up...Marcin Kikut (front) and Rudnevs

LECH POZNAN (Pol)

ON the Berlin to Moscow railway, the city of Poznan is booming both in the business world and the Europa League. Losing a Champions League eliminator to Sparta Prague last summer was a bitter pill for the reigning Polish champions to swallow, but they have more than made up for the disappointment with their excellent results in Europe since. Home and away draws with Juventus – 3-3 in Turin when Latvian striker Artjoms Rudnevs hit a memorable hat-trick and 1-1 in their newly-renovated Stadion Miejski – were accompanied by a 3-1 home victory over Manchester City.

While going great guns in Europe, the irony is that Lech have taken their eye off the domestic ball, so much so that they went into the winter break hovering just above the relegation zone. Spanish coach Jose Mari Bakero, appointed in November, says the players no longer have the luxury of picking and choosing their matches and given the former Barcelona attacking midfielder's no-nonsense approach to the game, any player saving himself for the Europa League could be in very big trouble indeed.

Playmaker...Cleiton Xavier

METALIST KHARKIV (Ukr)

FROM Ukraine's second city, Metalist have recently turned themselves into redoubtable European giant-killers. In the 2008-09 UEFA Cup they reached the last 16 before being eliminated by Dynamo Kyiv on away goals, and they have been up to their old tricks again this term, securing second-place in their pool behind PSV Eindhoven.

"No one can argue with the good name we've made for ourselves in Europe," says inspirational coach Myron Markevych. "This is what can happen when you work hard, dedicate yourself to a goal and believe. We're not surprise packets any more.

"Four times in the past two years we've played top Italian side Sampdoria and three times we've won. That does say something."

Backed to the hilt by industrialist Oleksandr Yaroslavsky, one of the richest men in Ukraine, Metalist have gone down the same Brazilian recruitment route as rivals Shakhtar Donetsk, attracting playmaker Cleiton Xavier (ex-Palmeiras), wide man Fininho (Sport Recife) and multi-purpose forward Taison (Internacional). Solidity comes in the form of locally-born keeper Oleksandr Goryainov and Serb defender Milan Obradovic.

Worth watching...Degen (left) and Bienvenu

YOUNG BOYS (Swi)

HOME form alone was responsible for YB's qualification for the last 32 of the Europa League. Lively, enterprising and spirited in beating Getafe 2-0, Odense 4-2 and Stuttgart 4-2 in their own backyard, the Swiss capital club crumbled on their road trips, losing all three and failing to register a single goal. The fact they play on artificial turf at the Stade de Suisse may have something to do with their schizophrenic ways; so might the abundance of talented but raw elements in their line-up.

On their Europa League travels they have often lacked belief and if they are to make any further progress, coach Vladimir Petkovic has to toughen them mentally. "I don't think we have a complex about playing away," says Petkovic. "Yes we were heavily beaten in a Champions League qualifier at Tottenham [4-0] and picked up no Europa League points outside Berne. But the critics conveniently forget our 1-0 victory at Fenerbahce in an earlier Champions League game. We came through a trial by fire splendidly."

Next opponents Zenit St Petersburg may be well advised to keep a close eye on the threat of midfielder David Degen, and strikers Henri Bienvenu and Emmanuel Mayuka.

1991 RED STAR BELGRADE

Gamble on

Prosinecki

Serbia's aristocrats have turned to a hero of the club's finest hour. Jonathan Wilson recalls their 1991 European Cup triumph

THE SUM OF Robert Prosinecki's off-the-field leadership experience is a couple of years working as an assistant to Slaven Bilic with the Croatia national team and as boss of a magazine in Croatia that soon folded, so his appointment as coach of Red Star Belgrade shortly before Christmas, it's fair to say, was not made on the basis of anything he had previously demonstrated as a manager, whether in football or beyond.

The move feels rather like a desperate last gamble, an attempt by the Serbian club to find a figure with the charisma and sparkle to unify an organisation so chaotic that they are on their 13th manager and fourth chairman since Dragan Dzajic stood down as chairman in 2004. It hardly helps Prosinecki's cause that he is a Croat – although his mother was a Serb – but his record as a player for the club of course gives him a distinct advantage.

"My vision of Red Star is that of a team playing attacking football, keeping possession and dominating their rivals like we did when I played here," says the former midfielder who turned 42 in January.

However, while this is a worthy aim, the gulf between his day and now is vast.

The team Prosinecki left behind when he joined Real Madrid in the summer of 1991 was one of the greatest European football has known. Forget the drab, paranoid European Cup Final in which Red Star beat Marseille in a penalty shoot-out; in their passage to that game they produced some stunning football.

After sealing a 5-2 aggregate win against Grasshopper with a 4-1 victory in the second leg in Zurich, they were drawn to face Rangers in the second round. Graeme Souness, the Scottish club's manager, sent his assistant Walter Smith to Belgrade to scout Red Star and he is said to have returned with a punchy two-word report: "We're fucked". And they were – Red Star winning 3-0 in Belgrade and progressing with a 1-1 draw at Ibrox.

It was 3-0 again in the first leg of the quarter-final against Dinamo Dresden, and Red Star were awarded a 3-0 win in the second leg after the match in Germany was abandoned amid rioting with the visitors leading 2-1. That left them to face another German side, Bayern Munich, in a semi-final that has a strong case to be acknowledged as the best two-legged tie there has ever been.

Greatness in sport is a nebulous concept which lies in something beyond medals and tangible success. Mere excellence is not enough; the great must also suffer, must look deep into their souls and find there an inner strength. None can be truly great unless they have been tested. As Milton pointed out, there is little merit in a "fugitive and cloister'd virtue". Few have ever looked into the abyss as Red Star did in that second leg.

In the first leg in Germany, they were cool, efficient and clinical, as they had been throughout. Roland Wohlfahrt gave Bayern a 23rd-minute lead, but the pace and quality of Red Star's counter-attack meant they always looked dangerous. Darko Pancev somehow missed a near-open goal after one sumptuous break, the ball becoming caught between his feet as he slid on to Prosinecki's cross, but just before half-time it was the Macedonian who equalised.

The move began deep in the Red Star half, by the right corner-flag, as an Olaf Thon through ball was intercepted by Slobodan Marovic, who had put in a series of meaty challenges on Brian Laudrup before finally getting a yellow card, after which he defended with immaculate composure. Marovic nudged the ball on for Dusko Radinovic, the buccaneering right-back, and he laid it off to Miodrag Belodedici, the graceful Romania sweeper. Still in his own box, he fed Prosinecki, who turned and arced a 60-yard pass in behind Hans Pflugler, Bayern's left-back. The rapid Dragisa Binic ran on and whipped a cross along the top of the six-yard box for Pancev to slide in at the back post. It was a perfect goal, all but undefendable by any side that has any attacking inclination, and it was entirely characteristic of Red Star's style.

The winner in Munich was also a goal of technical excellence, but it came after an extraordinary two minutes of football. Bayern felt they should have had a penalty when Belodedici appeared to have blocked a cross with his arm, though television replays later showed that the referee, Hubert Forstinger, had got it absolutely right and the ball had struck the Romanian's chest. From the resulting corner, Stefan Reuter poked the ball

Bayern beaten...with the scores locked, Red Star secure their place in the 1991 European Cup Final courtesy of a last-minute own goal

Young star...Prosinecki

RED STAR 1991 Who was who?

Back row (left to right)

STEVAN STOJANOVIC
Goalkeeper who went on to play in Belgium for Antwerp. Retired in 1995.

SINISA MIHAJLOVIC
Central defender who later had a successful career in Italy with Roma, Sampdoria, Lazio and Internazionale. Now coach of Fiorentina.

ROBERT PROSINECKI
Midfielder who went on to play for Real Madrid and Barcelona. Recently appointed coach of Red Star after a spell as assistant coach of Croatia's national side.

MIODRAG BELODEDICI
Romanian defender who went on to play in Spain for Valencia and Villarreal. Now working for his national federation.

ILIJA NAJDOSKI
Macedonian left-back who went on to play in Spain, Turkey, Bulgaria and Switzerland. His son, Dino, is a Macedonia Under-21 international.

SLOBODAN MAROVIC
Defender who later played in Norway. Now back at Red Star as an assistant to Prosinecki.

Front row (left to right)

VLADIMIR JUGOVIC
Midfielder who enjoyed an illustrious career in Italy with Sampdoria, Juventus, Lazio and Inter. Also had spells with Atletico Madrid and Monaco.

DRAGISA BINIC
Striker who went on to play for Sparta Prague and ended his career in Japan with a short spell at Nagoya Grampus Eight. Had a controversial period as general manager of Obilic, the Belgrade club closely linked to the Serbian warlord Arkan.

DARKO PANCEV
Striker who went on to have a disappointing spell in Italy with Inter. Now working for the Macedonian federation.

DEJAN SAVICEVIC
Midfielder who went on to appear in a second European Cup Final, for Milan in 1994. Is now the president of the Montenegrin football federation.

REFIK SABANADZOVIC
Defender who went on to play in Greece for AEK and Olympiakos before ending his career in the US with Kansas City Wizards.

in at the back post only to find that Forstinger had already blown for a shove by Klaus Augenthaler as he flicked the ball on. Incensed, Bayern lost their shape for a moment – and that was enough. Pancev touched off a Belodedici clearance for Dejan Savicevic, who ran from halfway before driving a low finish past Raimond Aumann to give Red Star a 2-1 lead to take back to Belgrade.

Before the second leg, three Armbrust missiles were fired by Croatian nationalists into the village of Borovo Selo near Vukovar. For Yugoslavia, the end was coming, and the Belgrade in which Bayern arrived was a febrile, anxious place. Red Star's team was made up of representatives of five of Yugoslavia's six republics: it became a last vestige of the Titoist ideal.

Sinisa Mihajlovic, who had been born in Borovo Selo, gave his side the lead with a deflected free-kick midway through the first half and Red Star seemed safe, appearing in command even 20 minutes into the second half. But then an Augenthaler free-kick slithered through the legs of Red Star keeper Stevan Stojanovic. Five minutes later, Manfred Bender pounced on a loose ball in the box to equalise. Suddenly the ghosts of a thousand chokes past sprang up: Yugoslavia's three successive Olympic silvers, two defeats in European Championship Finals, Partizan's defeat in the 1966 European Cup Final, Red Star's own defeat by Borussia Monchengladbach in the 1979 UEFA Cup Final, the five Yugoslav sides beaten in European semi-finals, Yugoslavia's two defeats in World Cup semis...

This time though, when there would be no second chances, Red Star found their mettle. The last 20 minutes were of a very high technical quality and produced preposterous drama. Wohlfahrt hit a post, Stojanovic made a superb save from Augenthaler, Pancev made a hash of two fine chances, Binic hooked a volley a fraction wide.

And then, in the final minute, Mihajlovic swept in a cross from the left. It was too low and Augenthaler should have cleared easily, but the ball looped off his foot, hung in the air, and slowly, slowly dropped down over Aumann who, flat-footed, could only push the ball over the line. It was a ridiculous end to a sublime game and Red Star's players seemed overcome. Savicevic performed a lone somersault. Mihajlovic buried his head in the turf. Prosinecki ran to the bench and hugged a substitute so ferociously it seemed he was trying to rip off his head.

Two decades on, it is those memories that Prosinecki will now try to resurrect and that sort of emotion he is attempting to generate. But while the team of 1991 – destroyed in its prime by politics and war – was one of the greatest of all time, today's Red Star remain only second best in Belgrade, to arch-rivals Partizan. ●

"The move began deep in the Red Star half, by the right corner flag...it was a perfect goal, all but undefendable by any side that has any attacking inclination, and it was entirely characteristic of Red Star's style"

Discuss this at worldsoccer.com/forums

On the ball...Mihajlovic scored a trademark first-half free-kick in the semi-final second leg against Bayern Munich then saw his cross deflected for the own goal clincher that took Red Star into the European Cup Final

FROM THE ARCHIVES

MAY 1991: RED STAR JOIN THE ELITE

There's a fine finish in prospect

WHATEVER happens, a new name will be inscribed this year on the Champions' Cup. Not only are Marseille and Red Star absent from the roll of honour, no French or Yugoslav side has ever won the most prestigious and enriching prize in the European club game.

Knowledge of both teams suggests that Red Star are favourites, their attacking talents more potently balanced than Marseille, while both defences looked vulnerable in the semi-finals.

Crvena Zvezda (the Serbo-Croat version of the name) boast a history of achievement.

They are one of only three clubs to have conquered Liverpool's Anfield in a European match; they are domestic league and cup holders, and poised for a repeat; they are one of only three Slav teams to have reached a European Final (beaten in the UEFA Cup by Borussia Monchengladbach in 1979); and they have impressed at home and abroad for so many years despite seeing more than three dozen star players race away into the western professional distance (one of them, Dragan Stojkovic, may yet prove a key player for Marseille). And another exodus is on the cards, with Real Madrid and Milan, learning the lessons of their various European exits, keen on Red Star's key players.

This game in Bari should be the present Red Star's apotheosis. Slav teams' international achievements over the years have never matched the sum total of that country's wealth of talent, both playing and coaching.

The question is one of motivation: do they really possess the sporting ambition to beat the millionaires of Marseille before joining their ranks?

Fernando URIBE

COLOMBIA

Title-winning striker with plenty still to prove

THE FORMER ASSISTANT COACH at Manchester City, Juan Carlos Osorio, took Once Caldas to the Colombian title in December with a style of play owing much to his time in England. Osorio's team look to strike quickly down the flanks – something illustrated perfectly by the key goal in the second leg of the play-off Final against Tolima which put them 2-0 up on the night and ahead on aggregate. From deep on the right, Dayro Moreno curled a wonderful pass behind the visitors' defence for Uribe to time his run, bring the ball under control and score.

Uribe is a centre-forward with the knack of getting in front of his marker in the danger zone. That goal against Tolima was an example of the 23-year-old at his best and a common enough sight in a wonderful year for the young striker.

Given his professional debut with Atletico Huila at the age of 15, it has taken Uribe a while to become an overnight sensation. He was forced out of the game for a year as a result of a legal row with his former agent and only got back on track in 2009 at Deportivo Pereira, his home-town club.

In 2010, a short ride away in Manizales, he did even better with Once Caldas, scoring 25 league goals. The first three came on his debut – even though he still finished on the losing side – in the first of the two championships that Colombia stages every year. The last of those 25 was the one that helped clinch the second championship, the Finalizacion.

There was also the one he scored in the club's Libertadores campaign, getting behind the Sao Paulo defence to glance in a header that helped his side to a 2-1 win. However, that was the only time he was on target in eight games in a competition which provided a platform for his promise but also highlighted his limitations.

Uribe excels at breaking past a defence as he times his run well, has good acceleration and is a competent finisher. Apart from this, though, his contribution can be patchy. Not at his best with his back to goal, he fails to provide much of a platform for his midfielders and he also needs to work on his combination play outside the penalty area.

Uribe might use this year's Libertadores to show he has improved in these areas, but there is no guarantee that it will be for Once Caldas as the club is in financial crisis despite the title win.

While a good offer could force him to move on once more, supporters of Once Caldas will be hoping the combination of coach Osorio, winger Moreno and front-runner Uribe can be kept together for a while yet.

Tim Vickery

FACT FILE

Club Once Caldas
Country Colombia
Born January 1, 1988, in Pereira
Previous clubs Atletico Huila, Envigado, Girardot, Cortulua, Deportivo Pereira
International debut August 2010 v Bolivia
International caps 2 (0 goals)
Honours 2010 Colombian Finalizacion

Shinji KAGAWA

Dortmund delighted with their bargain buy

GERMANY

THE THEORY that European clubs recruit Asian players solely to reap commercial spin-offs has been bundled up, weighted down and thrown into the river by Borussia Dortmund's Japanese attacking midfielder as they set a blistering pace in the Bundesliga.

Bought last June for just £300,000 from J.League side Cerezo Osaka, the 21-year-old has been sensational and his displays so far have outstripped big-name signings such as Raul at Schalke, Diego at Wolfsburg and Mauro Camoranesi at Stuttgart.

His bursts of acceleration, agility, relentless activity and excellent finishing have brought him eight goals in his first 17 league games. Everything he does is at breakneck speed and invariably comes off. He was no standout in Japan, but Naohiro Takahara saw his potential.

"I'd been impressed by Kagawa for quite some time and tipped off a German agent [Thomas Kroth]," says ex-Hamburg and Japan striker Takahara. "All the lad needed was someone in Europe to take a chance on him. I knew he'd respond well."

He certainly has. And six months after signing for Borussia, his market value has increased tenfold.

Nick Bidwell

FACT FILE

Club Borussia Dortmund (Ger)
Country Japan
Born March 17, 1989, in Tarumi-ku, Kobe
Previous clubs Cerezo Osaka
International debut May 2008 v Ivory Coast
International caps 17 (3 goals)

Barry BANNAN

Little Scottish midfielder with a big future

ENGLAND

AT THE START of the season, Aston Villa's youth academy graduate looked set for another season in the shadows. Despite gaining first-team experience in the Championship during loan spells with Derby County and Blackpool – where he was an occasional contributor to their promotion-winning campaign – he looked unlikely to progress beyond Villa's reserves.

Half a season later, Bannan is a Premier League regular, has signed a new four-year deal and made his international debut with manager Craig Levein hailing him as "a future star of Scottish football".

The catalyst for this transformation in fortunes was Martin O'Neill's post-haste resignation as Villa manager in August. Despite some stunning displays for the club's second string, Bannan was consistently overlooked by O'Neill, who tends to like his players big and burly.

"Martin had a problem with my height," admits Bannan, who is 5ft 6in and slight of frame. "I knew I was not going to get a chance under him no matter how well I did in training."

His break came when reserve-team manager Kevin McDonald was put in temporary charge. Subsequently, under the new management team of Gerard Houllier and Gary McAllister, a regular starting place has yielded a string of influential displays, most notably in November's 2-2 draw with Manchester United, after which United's Scotland captain Darren Fletcher compared him favourably to fellow diminutive playmakers Xavi, Andres Iniesta and Paul Scholes.

Dan Brennan

FACT FILE

Club Aston Villa (Eng)
Country Scotland
Born December 1, 1989, in Airdrie
Previous clubs Derby County (Eng, loan), Blackpool (Eng, loan)
International debut November 2010 v Faroe Islands
Caps 1 (0 goals)

ITALY

Jonathan BIABIANY

French flier setting Serie A alight

ULTIMATELY SACKED for his side's lukewarm start to the season, Internazionale boss Rafa Benitez may have made his share of miscalculations since taking over from Jose Mourinho, but they definitely did not include his faith in this young French forward who – after three years at the Inter academy and a further three campaigns on the loan trail at Chievo, Modena and Parma – is blossoming splendidly in his inaugural campaign in the *Nerazzurri* first team.

Youngsters contracted to big Italian clubs such as Inter tend to find themselves on a never-ending loop of temporary transfers, and after a successful stint at Parma last term – when he scored six goals in 29 appearances – Biabiany fully expected to be farmed out again, only for Benitez to fall in love with his ability in pre-season and slap an immediate veto on any further postings for the youngster.

With Mourinho still in charge, Biabiany probably would have been sent packing, but Benitez was far happier working with nascent talent and it did not take long for the Spaniard's eye to be vindicated. Usually lining up on the right flank, his bullet-like speed and dribbling prowess has had full-backs in the Champions League and Serie A begging for mercy. His only weakness appears to be the need for a shade more know-how and composure in goalscoring situations.

The word up and down the Italian peninsula is that Biabiany is the heir apparent to Thierry Henry, and while such comparisons are never easy for the up-and-coming to assume, in this case they are inevitable. Indeed, the pair share an incredible amount of common ground: the formative years in the grey Parisian suburbs, the Guadeloupe family connections, the lightening acceleration – Biabiany can run 100 metres in 10.3 seconds – and the languid elegance of his play.

"I'm really flattered to be likened to Thierry Henry," says the 22-year-old, who is nicknamed "Bego" after his mother's surname, Begora. "Henry and the Brazilian striker Ronaldo are my two favourite players. I've tried to model myself on them.

"It's always nice to get the recognition. I'd like to think I'm moving in the right direction, but I also know that there's a long way to go yet.

"At a club like Inter, which is defending national and European titles, you don't dare become complacent. You have to keep progressing."

Strange how the fates conspired to pave the way for Biabiany's acceptance into the San Siro fold. Sent to Paris in 2004 to run the rule over a teenager in the French capital, a scout from Inter decided to kill some time by watching a junior game between Blanc-Mesnil and Red Star. Ninety minutes and four Biabiany goals later, the emissary tore up his original schedule and concentrated instead on selling Inter to the youngster and his family.

"When my coach told me Inter were interested, I thought at first it was a joke," recalls Biabiany. "Then the reality sunk in and it felt like I'd won the lottery.

"Within two weeks, I'd had a trial with the club and signed on. It was that quick.

"For me, Inter is the ultimate. To be taken on by a club with so many stars is an honour, though you have to realise, too, that the responsibilities that come with wearing this shirt are massive."

Nick Bidwell

FACT FILE

Club Internazionale (Ita)
Country France
Born April 28, 1988, in Paris
Previous clubs Chievo (Ita, loan), Modena (Ita, loan), Parma (Ita, loan)

FIVE TO FOLLOW: EUROPEAN STARS

Nick Bidwell profiles the Champions League's hidden gems

Club/Country Milan/Italy
Born November 12, 1986
Position Right-back

Ignazio ABATE

ONE of the best-kept secrets of a resurgent Milan, Abate has been transformed in the past 12 months from a wide midfielder with certain limitations into an assured right-back.

Used in spells as an emergency full-back last season, the 24-year-old saw this become permanent when Massimiliano Allegri took over as Milan coach. And the reconfiguration has worked well, with Abate proving a match even for the likes of Real Madrid's Cristiano Ronaldo.

His father is former Udinese and Internazionale keeper Beniamino Abate, who's now on the Milan coaching staff.

Club/Country Lyon/France
Born March 10, 1989
Position Midfielder

Maxime GONALONS

FROM the Lyon suburb of Venissieux, this defensive midfielder or centre-back almost didn't turn pro at all. Three years ago he had a serious foot infection and, with septicaemia setting in, amputation was considered for a while.

Thankfully a cure was found for the blood poisoning and, after eight long and frustrating months on the sidelines, he was able to resume his career. He became an overnight sensation in a Champions League tie away to Liverpool last season, coming on as a substitute to score in his side's memorable 2-1 win.

Club/Country Real Madrid/Spain
Born November 24, 1986
Position Winger

Pedro LEON

IN equalising in the last minute of the 2-2 Champions League draw in the San Siro against Milan in early November, the 24-year-old from Murcia became the first Spaniard to score for the galacticos this season.

Renowned for his elusive running on the ball and powerful shooting, the attacking midfielder joined Real last summer from capital city rivals Getafe. While first-team outings at the Bernabeu have been rationed, whenever he's featured his energy and purpose have shone through. His brother Luis is a professional cyclist.

Club/Country Copenhagen (Den)/Brazil
Born March 27, 1988
Position Midfielder

CLAUDEMIR

A CLOSE-SEASON signing from Dutch club Vitesse Arnhem, the central or right-sided midfielder made his mark in this season's Champions League when he volleyed in the equaliser in the 1-1 draw at home to Barcelona in November. However, in many ways it was a goal out of nowhere as the 22-year-old is known more for his technical class, creativity and dynamism than his finishing ability.

Described by Copenhagen coach Stale Solbakken as one of his best-ever recruits, Claudemir began his professional life at the Sao Carlos club in Sao Paulo state.

Club/Country Shakhtar Donetsk/Ukraine
Born August 3, 1989
Position Defender

Yaroslav RAKITSKIY

SHAKHTAR coach Mircea Lucescu certainly got his sums right early in 2009 when he decided to promote this highly accomplished central defender from the club's youth ranks rather than venture into the transfer market for reinforcements.

The 21-year-old, who can also play full-back, has been one of Shakhtar's most reliable performers in the Champions League this term and a number of Premier League clubs are reported to be tracking him. An outstanding amalgam of steel, determination and comfort on the ball, his party piece is a swerving shot from long distance.

Standing Firm

Peterjon Cresswell visits the home city of the two clubs who stand head and shoulders above everyone else in Scotland

WHILE GLASGOW MAY unite the country's footballing fraternity behind the national team at Hampden Park, at club level it is a city that is deeply divided by the "Old Firm" of Celtic and Rangers – two clubs whose support is historically drawn from followers of differing religious backgrounds.

Founded by four brothers in 1873, Rangers represent the city's Protestant inhabitants, while Celtic, formed 15 years later by Brother Walfrid of the Marist Order to raise money for the poor of Glasgow's East End during the mass Irish emigration to Scotland, are the club of the Catholic population.

Although neither club set out with polarised aims, over the course of time – and given the political struggle across the Irish Sea – each have witnessed controversy and violence. Union Flags are flown by Rangers fans in support of Northern Ireland's Unionist community, while Celtic supporters wave the Irish tricolour, and to this day derby clashes at Ibrox Stadium or Celtic Park remain extremely tense and fiery affairs.

Inaugural success

Rangers currently edge their great rivals 53 to 42 in title wins, with their first silverware coming in 1891 when they shared the inaugural Scottish league title with Dumbarton after a play-off. The club's first period of domination came between the wars, with Bob McPhail and Sam English scoring the goals under the managerial guidance of William Struth. By this point, Old Firm games were taking on legendary status and a record-breaking crowd of 118,567 saw the game on January 2, 1939.

Although Celtic notched up 19 title wins before the Second World War, they came to the fore with the arrival of John "Jock" Stein as a player in 1951. After captaining the side to the title in 1954 he took over as manager in 1965. Stein's team, later dubbed the

THE STADIUMS

1 CELTIC PARK
Also known as Parkhead, Celtic's home holds 61,000 and is the biggest football stadium in Scotland. Opened in 1892, it was most recently renovated in 1998 and is due to host the opening ceremony of the 2014 Commonwealth Games.

Picture: www.stspix.com

2 FIRHILL STADIUM
Home to Partick Thistle since being built in 1909, it now has a capacity of 10,921 and is also home to Glasgow Warriors rugby union team. Football clubs Clyde and Hamilton Academical have also used it as a temporary home.

3 IBROX STADIUM
Built in 1899, this 51,000-capacity arena is one of the oldest in the UK. Ibrox used to house more than twice this number – 118,567 watched a match with Celtic in 1939 – before its redevelopment into an all-seater.

4 HAMPDEN PARK
Built in 1937, Hampden Park held a European-record crowd of 149,415 in 1937 for the game between Scotland and England. These days the capacity of Scotland's national stadium is set at 52,000. Home of Queen's Park.

"Lisbon Lions" after their European Cup win of 1967 in Portugal's capital, were all born within 30 miles of Celtic Park, making their feat of winning every trophy available to them that year even more remarkable.

Facing Helenio Herrera's cynical Internazionale in that 1967 Final were flame-haired winger Jimmy Johnstone, canny inside-forward Bertie Auld and solid centre-half Billy McNeill. A late Stevie Chalmers goal made history for the Bhoys, who became the first British team to lift Europe's premier trophy. The side went on to win a record nine consecutive titles, but they met with brutality in the 1967 Intercontinental Cup against Argentina's Racing and later disappointment in the 1970 European Cup Final.

Despite a strong showing in the 1950s and early 1960s, and mercurial performances by Jim Baxter, Rangers lived in Celtic's shadow during this period. The era was also marked by the tragic death of 66 fans who were crushed at the Old Firm game at Ibrox in 1971. A year later Rangers' only European trophy win, against Moscow Dynamo, was marred by a pitch invasion. Rangers were allowed to keep the Cup-winners Cup but received a two-year ban from Europe.

Following the retirement of key players such as John Greig and Willie Johnston, it wasn't until entrepreneur David Murray bought the club in 1988 that Rangers transformed and began to dominate the 1990s. Murray renovated Ibrox and, thanks to the profile of manager Graeme Souness, brought in numerous players from England and overseas, such as Paul Gascoigne and Brian Laudrup.

Most of all, Murray's new-era Rangers made the ground-breaking signing of a Catholic in ex-Celtic striker Mo Johnston, ushering in a period of regular participation with the big boys in the Champions League. A team starring Ally McCoist and Barry Ferguson, under the later management of Walter Smith, would go on to equal the nine title wins in a row of Celtic's Lisbon Lions.

Committment...Lee McCulloch of Rangers (left) holds off Celtic's Georgios Samaras

While Rangers were spending big – particularly after the arrival of Dutch coach Dick Advocaat – Celtic nearly went out of business in 1994. Another Dutch coach, Wim Jansen, stopped the rot and Rangers' title run by leading Celtic to the championship in 1998. On the pitch, the goalscoring prowess

> **"Derby clashes at Ibrox and Celtic Park are extremely tense and fiery"**

of Sweden's Henrik Larsson gave him hero status; off it, chaos ruled. It took the arrival of Martin O'Neill as manager for the Hoops to up their game, with two consecutive title wins prefacing a memorable day in Seville. Some 80,000 fans thronged the city for the trouble-free 2003 UEFA Cup Final with Porto, before a heartbreaking 3-2 defeat. Five years later, after disharmony and belt-tightening at Ibrox, Rangers' fans disgraced themselves in Manchester at the UEFA Cup Final with Zenit St Petersburg, ironically under a triumphant Advocaat.

But while the big two may totally dominate football in Scotland, it does not mean they are the only clubs in Glasgow. Surviving on a week-by-week basis are second-tier Partick Thistle in north-west Glasgow and amateurs Queen's Park, who attract only three-figure crowds to their Hampden Park home for matches in Scotland's fourth level. L

GLASGOW SURVIVAL GUIDE

Heart and soul

L ARRIVAL & TRANSPORT

Glasgow Airport is eight miles west of the city. Buses and taxis run from there to the centre of town. The city is served by an underground line, an overland rail and a network of privatised buses. All information can be found at www.travelinescotland.com

L HOTELS & INFORMATION

The Glasgow Visitor Information Centre (11 George Square, 0141 204 4400, www.seeglasgow.com) can take credit-card hotel bookings. The Sherbrooke Castle Hotel (www.sherbrooke.co.uk) in Pollokshields is handy for Hampden Park and within easy reach of Ibrox. The four-star Number 10 Hotel (www.10queensdrive.co.uk) is even closer to the national stadium and offers special packages around match days.

L EATING & DRINKING

Glasgow is great for a night out. The Merchant City and the West End are dotted with restaurants and bars. Glasgow is also renowned for its choice of Indian restaurants.

L DAYTIME ENTERTAINMENT

For a first impression of the city and the waterfront, boats cruise down the Clyde (www.clydecruises.co.uk), dropping you off at the Glasgow Science Centre (Pacific Quay; www.glasgowsciencecentre.org). Check out the Scottish Football Museum (www.scottishfootballmuseum.org.uk) at Hampden for a comprehensive and entertaining insight.

L MATCH DAY

Hampden Park (www.hampdenpark.co.uk) is in Mount Florida, south Glasgow, near the rail station of the same name. For internationals, many Scotland fans meet in pubs along Victoria Road, such as the Pandora, the Victoria Arms and the Queen's Park Cafe. The Clockwork Beer Company (1153-1155 Cathcart Road) is closer to the ground. Tickets for Queen's Park games (£11) can be bought on match days. Ibrox, just south of Govan, has its own stop on the underground line from central St Enoch and is an easy hop from town. Ticket details from 0871 702 1972 and www.rangers.co.uk. Nearby pubs include The Stadium on Copland Road and The Albion Way at 179 Broomloan Road. Celtic Park (0871 226 1888, www.celticfc.net) is in the East End of the city, the other side of the Barras market from the city centre. It's a fair walk along Gallowgate or take First Bus 43, 61 or 62. Pubs line nearby Gallowgate, including Bairds Bar and Bar 67, both crammed with memorabilia. Partick's Firhill is on the road of the same name at the junction of Maryhill and Garscube Roads. Kelvinbridge and St George's Cross are the closest underground stations. There's a social club at the ground.

FORTHCOMING FIXTURES

- Celtic Park
  - Feb 20 Celtic v Rangers
  - Mar 5 Celtic v Hamilton
- Firhill Stadium
  - Feb 19 Partick Thistle v Falkirk
  - Mar 5 Partick Thistle v Dundee
- Hampden Park
  - Feb 5 Queen's Park v East Stirling
  - Feb 12 Queen's Park v Arbroath
  - Mar 5 Queens's Park v Clyde
- Ibrox Stadium
  - Feb 12 Rangers v Motherwell
  - Feb 27 Rangers v St Johnstone

(always check fixtures before travelling)

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WORLD SERVICE

THE ULTIMATE GLOBAL NEWS AND RESULTS SECTION

Derby clash

Theo Walcott (right) gets the better of Chelsea skipper John Terry – and also managed to get on the scoresheet – as his Arsenal team beat their London rivals and reigning Premier League champions 3-1 at the Emirates Stadium. More information, page 98.

INTERNATIONALS

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ARGENTINA

On the road

Sergio Batista's side will play Portugal in London on February 9. Friendlies have also been confirmed for March against USA and Costa Rica.

BRAZIL

World Cup warm-up

The *Selecao* will play Holland in a friendly, in June, at one of the 12 stadiums that will be used to host matches at the 2014 World Cup. Friendlies have also been confirmed against France in Paris on February 9 and Germany in Stuttgart on August 10.

The preliminary draw for the 2014 World Cup will be held on July 30 in Rio de Janeiro. The hosts qualify automatically, so there will be a further 31 places to play for over the next three years.

Attraction...Bielsa

CHILE

Nothing without ex-coach Bielsa

Despite winning the 2009 competition and being runners-up the year before, Chile's under-23 side will not play in this summer's Toulon tournament after the competition's organisers admitted that the country was not an attractive proposition without outgoing coach Marcelo Bielsa.

A spokesman said: "For our organisation the attraction of Chile was their trainer, not Chile itself."

Argentina, Colombia and Mexico will be Latin America's representatives this year.

ENGLAND

Danish trip

Fabio Capello's side will play Denmark in a friendly

RESULTS

CARIBBEAN CHAMPIONSHIP FINALS

In Martinique

Group H*

Nov 26 - Fort-de-France
Trinidad & Tobago 0
Cuba 2 (J Colome 23, Linares 79)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Lancaster (Guy)
Trinidad & Tobago: J M Williams - Cupid, Marshall (Cyrus 46), J Jones, James, Daniel, Peltier, Leon, Noel (Hector 67), K Baptiste (Gay 46), Jorsling. *Sent off: Peltier 84min.*
Cuba: O Molina - Marquez, Dranguet, Y Colome, J Colome, Urqelles, Francisco, Coroneaux, S Fernandez (Ramos 78), Duarte (Linares 78), Hernandez.

Nov 26 - Fort-de-France
Martinique 1 (Goron pen 79)
Grenada 1 (K Bain 29)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Bogle (Jam)
Martinique: Heurlie - Clement, Suedile, Cretinoir, Herelle, Cesar, Sidney (Goron 77), Gustan, Reuperne (Mence 70), Percin, Parsemain (Carole 59).
Grenada: A Baptiste - Phillip (Langaigne 66), Cyrus, P Modeste, Marshall, R Charles, K Bain, A Modeste, Rocastle, Neckles (Bradley Bubb 57), Facey (S Rennie 76).

Nov 28 - Fort-de-France
Grenada 1 (K Bain 70)
Trinidad & Tobago 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Cruz (CR)
Grenada: A Baptiste - Cyrus, Marshall (C Rennie 53), P Modeste, R Charles, K Bain, A Modeste, Rocastle (Langaigne 75), Neckles (Phillip 67), Bradley Bubb, Facey.
Trinidad & Tobago: Phillip - Molino, Wolfe, James, J Jones (Theobald 74), Leon, Noel, Hector (Glen 65), Cyrus, Jagdeosingh (Daniel 58), Jorsling.

Nov 28 - Fort-de-France
Martinique 0
Cuba 1 (Marquez 28)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Taylor (Bds)
Martinique: Heurlie - Clement, Suedile (Mence 69), Cretinoir, Herelle, Cesar, Carole (Sidney 47), Gustan, Reuperne (Goron 57), Percin, Parsemain.
Cuba: O Molina - Marquez, Dranguet, Y Colome, J Colome, Urqelles, Francisco, Coroneaux (Ramos 83), S Fernandez (R Fernandez 60), Duarte (Linares 63), Hernandez. *Sent off: Hernandez 39min, Dranguet 54min.*

Nov 30 - Fort-de-France
Cuba 0
Grenada 0
Ref: Bogle (Jam)
Cuba: O Molina - Francisco, Marquez, Clavelo, Y Colome, Mesa, Linares (Duarte 78), S Fernandez (Ramos 77), Urqelles, Coroneaux, R Fernandez.
Grenada: A Baptiste - Cyrus (Langaigne 46), C Rennie, P Modeste, R Charles (Julien 46), K Bain, A Modeste, Rocastle (S Rennie 61), Byron Bubb, Bradley Bubb, Facey.

Nov 30 - Fort-de-France
Martinique 0
Trinidad & Tobago 1 (Hector 47)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Taylor (Bds)
Martinique: Heurlie - Cretinoir, Herelle, Mence (Aliker 75), Audel, Deluge, Cesar, Gustan, Reuperne, Percin (Sidney 46), Goron (Parsemain 61).
Trinidad & Tobago: Phillip - Cyrus, Wolfe, James, Cupid (J Jones 76), Theobald, Molino, Leon, Daniel (Jagdeosingh 76), Hector, Jorsling (Glen 71).

CARIBBEAN CHAMP SHIP FINALS GROUP H*	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Cuba	3	2	1	0	3	0	7
Grenada	3	1	2	0	2	1	5
Trinidad & Tob	3	1	0	2	1	3	3
Martinique	3	0	1	2	1	3	1

Group I*

Nov 27 - Riviere-Pilote
Guyana 1 (D Jacobs 87)
Guadeloupe 1 (Loval 71)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Davis (T&T)
Guyana: Williams - Lowe, Moore, J Newton, Pollard, Moffat, K Jacobs, Bourne, Peters (H Newton 58), Codrington (D Jacobs 58), Millington (Abrams 78).
Guadeloupe: Bus - Lacroix, Lambourde, Lupede, Auvray, Clavier, Nicoise (Gendrey 67), Belson (Collet 46), Nabab (Gotin 90), Ictoi, Loval.

Nov 27 - Riviere-Pilote
Jamaica 3 (Shelton 14, 37, Richards 40)
Antigua & Barbuda 1 (G Gregory 49)
HT: 3-0. **Ref:** Wijngaarde (Sur)
Jamaica: Miller - Thomas, J Taylor, Francis, A Reid, Edwards, K Daley (Woodbine 74), Austin (Moodie 90), Richards (Vernan 81), Palmer, Shelton.
Antigua & Barbuda: DeCastro - Dublin, Parker, Carr, Murtagh, McCoy, J Thomas (G Gregory 46), Cochrane, A Thomas (Griffith 90), Burton (R Christian 70), Byers.

Nov 29 - Riviere-Pilote
Antigua & Barbuda 1 (G Gregory 69)
Guyana 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Wijngaarde (Sur)
Antigua & Barbuda: James - Dublin, Parker (Bleau 46), Mack, Murtagh, McCoy, G Gregory, A Thomas, Cochrane, Byers (R Christian 89), Skepple (Burton 59).
Guyana: Williams - Lowe, Moore (Peters 72), J Newton, Pollard, D Jacobs, K Jacobs, Bourne, Abrams (Beveney 65), Codrington, Millington (Gilkes 90).

Nov 29 - Riviere-Pilote
Guadeloupe 0
Jamaica 2 (Francis 53, R Johnson 90+3)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Lopez (Gtm)
Guadeloupe: Bus - Viator, Lambourde, Lupede, Auvray, Clavier, Hannany (Belson 52), D Mocka (Collet 58), Gotin (Nabab 67), Ictoi, Loval.
Jamaica: Miller - Thomas, J Taylor, Francis (Smith 74), A Reid, K Daley, Austin, Palmer, Richards (Edwards 81), Cummings (R Johnson 64), Shelton.

Dec 1 - Riviere-Pilote
Guadeloupe 1 (Lambourde 41)
Antigua & Barbuda 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Lopez (Gtm)
Guadeloupe: Bus - Viator, Lambourde, Lupede (Lacroix 46), Auvray, Nicoise (D Mocka 80), Gendrey, Collet (Clavier 69), Nabab, Ictoi, Loval.
Antigua & Barbuda: James - Dublin, Parker, Carr, R Christian (Burton 62), McCoy, Mack, Bleau (Skepple 74), A Thomas, G Gregory, Byers (J Thomas 90). *Sent off: Carr 86min.*

Dec 1 - Riviere-Pilote
Guyana 0
Jamaica 4 (Richards 43, Morgan 49, 74, Vernan 90)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Cruz (CR)
Guyana: Williams - Lowe, J Newton, Pollard, Ali, K Jacobs (Moffat 78), D Jacobs, Bourne, Beveney (Abrams 81), Peters (Moore 30), Codrington.
Jamaica: McCallum - Edwards (Campbell 46), J Taylor, Vernan, Moodie, A Reid, K Daley, Smith, Richards (Morgan 46), R Johnson, Shelton (Woodbine 53).

CARIBBEAN CHAMP SHIP FINALS GROUP I*	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Jamaica	3	3	0	0	9	1	9
Guadeloupe	3	1	1	1	2	3	4
Antigua & B	3	1	0	2	2	4	3
Guyana	3	0	1	2	1	6	1

The top two in both groups qualified for the semi-finals
**The two finals groups were named sequentially, after the 1st and 2nd round groups were named A, B, C, D, E, F and G*

Semi-finals

Dec 3 - Fort-de-France
Cuba 1 (R Fernandez 35)
Guadeloupe 2 (Gendrey pen 55, Lambourde 78)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Wijngaarde (Sur)
Cuba: O Molina - Francisco, Marquez, Y Colome, Hernandez, J Colome, S Fernandez (Ramos 82), Urqelles, Coroneaux (Linares 70), R Fernandez, Duarte (Mesa 83).
Guadeloupe: Bus - Lacroix, Lambourde, Hannany (Belson 60), Viator, Clavier, Gendrey, Collet (Babel 90), D Mocka (Antoine-Curier 69), Gotin, Ictoi.

Dec 3 - Fort-de-France
Jamaica 2 (Richards 6, Smith 97)
Grenada 1 (K Bain 13)
Aet. **HT:** 1-1. **90mins:** 1-1. **Ref:** Taylor (Bds)
Jamaica: Miller - Thomas, J Taylor, Francis (Smith 72), A Reid, Edwards (Campbell 106), Palmer, Austin, Richards, R Johnson (Cummings 27), Shelton. *Sent off: Campbell 111min.*
Grenada: A Baptiste - Phillip, Cyrus, P Modeste (Bradley Bubb 76), Marshall, Langaigne (Neckles 101), A Modeste, Rocastle, Byron Bubb (C Rennie 99), K Bain, Facey.

Third-place play-off

Dec 5 - Fort-de-France
Cuba 1 (Linares 12)
Grenada 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Lopez (Gtm)
Cuba: O Molina - Marquez, Dranguet, Y Colome, J Colome, Urqelles, Francisco, R Fernandez, Hernandez, Ramos (S Fernandez 72), Linares (Duarte 78).
Grenada: A Baptiste - Langaigne, Phillip, C Rennie, P Modeste (Neckles 46), A Modeste, Byron Bubb, Rocastle, S Rennie (Daniel 63), K Bain, Facey (Joseph 75).

Final

Dec 5 - Fort-de-France
Guadeloupe 1 (Gotin 36)
Jamaica 1 (Cummings 32)
Aet. **HT:** 1-1. **90mins:** 1-1. **Ref:** Wijngaarde (Sur)
Jamaica 5-4 on pens
Guadeloupe: Bus - Viator, Lambourde, Lupede, Auvray, Ictoi, Clavier, Hannany (Belson 78), Collet, Gendrey, Gotin (Antoine-Curier 105).
Jamaica: Miller - Thomas (Woodbine 117), J Taylor, Vernan, A Reid (Moodie 85), Smith, Austin, Edwards (Palmer 68), Richards, Cummings, Shelton.

PREVIOUS WINNERS

1989	Trinidad & Tobago
1991	Jamaica
1992	Trinidad & Tobago
1993	Martinique
1994	Trinidad & Tobago
1995	Trinidad & Tobago
1996	Trinidad & Tobago
1997	Trinidad & Tobago
1998	Jamaica
1999	Trinidad & Tobago
2001	Trinidad & Tobago
2005	Jamaica
2007	Haiti
2008	Jamaica

GULF CUP

In Yemen

Group A

Nov 22 - Aden
Yemen 0
Saudi Arabia 4 (Al Muwallad 4, Al Shlhoub 58, Aseri pen 72, Al Saeed 90)
HT: 0-1
Sent off: Al Aqel (Yemen) 73min

Nov 22 - Aden
Qatar 0
Kuwait 1 (Nasser 28)
HT: 0-1

Nov 25 - Abyan
Yemen 1 (Al Worafi 18)
Qatar 2 (Al Marri 35, 55)
HT: 1-1
Sent off: Al Baloushi (Qatar) 89min

Nov 25 - Abyan
Kuwait 0
Saudi Arabia 0

Nov 28 - Abyan
Yemen 0
Kuwait 3 (Al Ataiqi pen 18, Al Mutwa 33, 69)
HT: 0-2

Nov 28 - Aden
Saudi Arabia 1 (Shami og 89)
Qatar 1 (Al Ghanim 84)
HT: 0-0

GULF CUP GR OUP A	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Kuwait	3	2	1	0	4	0	7
Saudi Arabia	3	1	2	0	5	1	5
Qatar	3	1	1	1	3	3	4
Yemen	3	0	0	3	1	9	0

at the Parken Stadium in Copenhagen on February 9.

FRANCE

Chile and Brazil await

Les Bleus will play Chile in a friendly on August 10. The next outing for Laurent Blanc's side, however, is against Brazil – in a rematch of the 1998 World Cup Final – on February 9 at the Stade de France.

JAMAICA

Holders cash in

The Reggae Boyz retained the Caribbean Championship when Guadeloupe captain Jean Luc Lambourde – who scored the winner in their semi-final against Cuba – missed in a penalty shoot-out in the Final.

Jamaica's victory came despite a player revolt during the tournament over money.

Jamaica join Guadeloupe, Cuba and Grenada in qualifying for the CONCACAF Gold Cup, to be staged in the US in June.

KUWAIT

Another triumph

Goran Tufegdzic's side added the Gulf Cup to the West Asian Football Federation title they won recently as they beat Saudi Arabia 1-0 with a goal from midfielder Waleed Ali Jumah in extra time.

Ecstatic...Kuwait lift the Gold Cup

Group B

Nov 23 - Aden
Oman 1 (Al Hosni 37)
Bahrain 1 (Al Mishkhas 67)
HT: 1-0
Sent off: Al Sheiba (Oman) 74min

Nov 23 - Aden
Iraq 0
United Arab Emirates 0

Nov 26 - Aden
United Arab Emirates 0
Oman 0

Nov 26 - Aden
Bahrain 2 (Aaish 44, Abdullatif pen 90+6)
Iraq 3 (Alaa 24, 57, Hawar pen 90)
HT: 1-1

Nov 29 - Abyan
Oman 0
Iraq 0

Nov 29 - Aden
United Arab Emirates 3 (Khater 4, F Jumaa 8, A Jumaa 64)
Bahrain 1 (Fatadi 35)
HT: 2-1

GULF CUP GROUP B	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
UAE	3	1	2	0	3	1	5
Iraq	3	1	2	0	3	2	5
Oman	3	0	3	0	1	1	3
Bahrain	3	0	1	2	4	7	1

Top two in both groups qualified for semi-finals

Semi-finals

Dec 2 - Aden
Iraq 2 (Hawar 6, Alaa 14)
Kuwait 2 (Al Mutwa 1, F Al Enezi 58)
Aet. **HT:** 2-1. **90mins:** 2-2
Kuwait 5-4 on pens

Dec 2 - Aden
Saudi Arabia 1 (Abbas 55)
United Arab Emirates 0
HT: 0-0

Final

Dec 5 - Aden
Kuwait 1 (Jumah 94)
Saudi Arabia 0
Aet. **HT:** 0-0. **90mins:** 0-0
Sent off: Aseri (Saudi Arabia) 112min

PREVIOUS WINNERS

1970	Kuwait
1972	Kuwait
1974	Kuwait
1976	Kuwait
1979	Iraq
1982	Kuwait
1984	Iraq
1986	Kuwait
1988	Iraq
1990	Kuwait
1992	Qatar
1994	Saudi Arabia
1996	Kuwait
1998	Kuwait
2002	Saudi Arabia
2004	Saudi Arabia (Final in January)
2004	Qatar (Final in December)
2007	United Arab Emirates
2009	Oman

CECAFA CUP

(Council of East and Central Africa Football Associations*)

**Non-CECAFA nations Ivory Coast (playing with a B team), Malawi and Zambia took part by invitation*

In Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

Group A

Nov 27
Tanzania 0
Zambia 1 (Mudenda 24)
HT: 0-1

Nov 28
Burundi 2 (Nahimana 18, Habarugira 72)
Somalia 0
HT: 1-0

Nov 30
Zambia 0
Burundi 0

Nov 30
Tanzania 3 (Joseph pen 43, Bocco 76, Bakari 89)
Somalia 0
HT: 1-0

Dec 3
Somalia 0
Zambia 6 (F Sunzu 25, 27, 43, pen 49, Mukuka 28, Mapande 81)
HT: 0-4

Dec 4
Tanzania 2 (Bakari 20, 73)
Burundi 0
HT: 1-0
Sent off: Nzeyimana (Burundi) 88min

CECAFA CUP GROUP A	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Zambia	3	2	1	0	7	0	7
Tanzania	3	2	0	1	5	1	6
Burundi	3	1	1	1	2	2	4
Somalia	3	0	0	3	0	11	0

Group B

Nov 28
Sudan 0
Zanzibar 2 (Salum 11, 66)
HT: 0-1

Nov 28
Rwanda 2 (Birori 44, Kagabo 76)
Ivory Coast B 1 (Fabrice 18)
HT: 1-1

Dec 1
Sudan 0
Rwanda 0

Dec 1
Ivory Coast B 1 (Bolou 62)
Zanzibar 0
HT: 0-0

Dec 3
Zanzibar 0
Rwanda 0

Dec 3
Ivory Coast B 3 (Z Kone 36, Tchetche 59, 77)
Sudan 0
HT: 1-0

CECAFA CUP GROUP B	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Ivory Coast B	3	2	0	1	5	2	6
Rwanda	3	1	2	0	2	1	5
Zanzibar	3	1	1	1	2	1	4
Sudan	3	0	1	2	0	5	1

Group C

Nov 29
Ethiopia 1 (Bekele 24)
Uganda 2 (Masaba pen 35, Kisseka 46)
HT: 1-1

Nov 29
Malawi 3 (V Nyirenda 1, D Banda 26, 81)
Kenya 2 (Baraza 34, Ojwang 45+2)
HT: 2-2

Dec 2
Uganda 1 (Okwi 81)
Malawi 1 (V Nyirenda 2)
HT: 0-1

Dec 2
Kenya 1 (Ojwang 85)
Ethiopia 2 (Bekele 25, 44)
HT: 0-2

Dec 4
Malawi 1 (Kabichi 27)
Ethiopia 1 (Okwury 43)
HT: 1-1

Dec 5
Uganda 2 (Okwi 81, Mwesigwa pen 90+2)
Kenya 0
HT: 0-0

CECAFA CUP GROUP C	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Uganda	3	2	1	0	5	2	7
Malawi	3	1	2	0	5	4	5
Ethiopia	3	1	1	1	4	4	4
Kenya	3	0	0	3	3	7	0

Top two in each group and the two third-placed teams with the best record qualified for quarter-finals

Quarter-finals

Dec 7
Zambia 1 (F Sunzu 59)
Ethiopia 2 (Alebachew 18, Okwury 32)
HT: 0-2
Sent off: Nyirenda (Zambia) 36min

Dec 7
Ivory Coast B 1 (Tchetche 80)
Malawi 0
HT: 0-0

Dec 8
Uganda 2 (Sserumaga 13, Okwi pen 50)
Zanzibar 2 (Khamis 36, Morris 87)
No extra-time. **HT:** 1-1
Uganda 5-3 on pens

Dec 8
Tanzania 1 (Nsajigwa pen 61)
Rwanda 0
HT: 0-0

Semi-finals

Dec 10
Ethiopia 0
Ivory Coast B 1 (Tchetche 72)
HT: 0-0

Dec 10
Uganda 0
Tanzania 0
Aet
Tanzania 5-4 on pens

Third-place play-off

Dec 12
Ethiopia 3 (Okwury 2, 33, Alebachew 67)
Uganda 4 (Kisseka 5, Okwi 48, Mawejje 53, Matovu 72)
HT: 2-1

Final

Dec 12
Ivory Coast B 0
Tanzania 1 (Nsajigwa pen 42)
HT: 0-1
Tanzania: Kaseja - Yondani, Rajab (Makasi; Shamte), Nsajigwa, Aziz, Nditi, Bocco (Joseph), Bakari, Mwasika, Machaku, Nyoso.

PREVIOUS WINNERS
(since 1990; 1st tournament, 1973, though it is the successor to the Gossage Cup, 1st played 1926, and the East and Central African Senior Challenge Cup, 1967-1971)

1990	Uganda
1991	Zambia
1992	Uganda
1994	Tanzania
1995	Zanzibar
1996	Uganda
1999	Rwanda B
2000	Uganda
2001	Ethiopia
2002	Kenya
2003	Uganda
2004	Ethiopia
2005	Ethiopia
2006	Zambia*
2007	Sudan
2009	Uganda (Final in January)
2009	Uganda (Final in December)

**Trophy awarded to runners-up Sudan, as Zambia were a guest team*

Scorer...Soria (right)

NEW ZEALAND

Friendlies lined up

The All Whites have arranged friendlies away to China, in Nanning on March 25, and Japan, in Tokyo on March 29.

QATAR

Soria on target

Sebastian Soria scored in consecutive wins as Qatar warmed up for their hosting of the Asian Cup. They beat reigning African champions Egypt 2-1 and followed that with a 2-0 victory over Estonia.

TANZANIA

Hosts victorious

A first-half penalty from captain Shadrack Nsajigwa gave Tanzania a 1-0 win over an Ivory Coast B team in the 2010 CECAFA Cup Final.

Victory meant a first East and Central Africa regional title in 16 years for the Kilimanjaro Stars. Ivory Coast, like Zambia and Malawi, were invited guests and used the tournament as part of their preparation for the African Nations Championship in Sudan in February.

Tanzania will also be the venue for the 2011 tournament – the first time a country has hosted the CECAFA Cup in consecutive years.

Spot on...Nsajigwa

AFF CUP FINALS

(ASEAN Football Federation Association of South East Asian Nations)

Group A

In Indonesia

Dec 1 - Jakarta
Thailand 2 (Sarayoot 67, 90+1)
Laos 2 (Konekham 54, Kanlaya 84)
HT: 0-0

Dec 1 - Jakarta
Indonesia 5 (Asraruddin og 22, Gonzales 33, Ridwan 52, Arif 76, Irfan 90+4)
Malaysia 1 (Norshahrul 18)
HT: 2-1

Dec 4 - Jakarta
Thailand 0
Malaysia 0

Dec 4 - Jakarta
Indonesia 6 (Firman pen 26, 51, Ridwan 33, Irfan 62, Arif 77, Oktovianus 80)
Laos 0
HT: 2-0

Dec 7 - Palembang
Malaysia 5 (Amri 3, 38, Amirulhadi 73, Norshahrul 76, Kitsada og 90)
Laos 1 (Lamnao 8)
HT: 2-1

Dec 7 - Jakarta
Indonesia 2 (Bambang pen 82, pen 90+1)
Thailand 1 (Suree 68)
HT: 0-0
Sent off: Panupong (Thailand) 87min

AFF CUP FINALS GROUP A	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Indonesia	3	3	0	0	13	2	9
Malaysia	3	1	1	1	6	6	4
Thailand	3	0	2	1	3	4	2
Laos	3	0	1	2	3	13	1

Group B

In Vietnam

Dec 2 - Hanoi
Singapore 1 (Duric 65)
Philippines 1 (Greatwich 90+1)
HT: 0-0

Dec 2 - Hanoi
Vietnam 7 (Nguyen Anh Duc 14, 66, Nguyen Minh Phuong 30, Le Tan Tai 52, Nguyen Trong Hoang 73, 83, Nguyen Vu Phong 90+1)
Myanmar 1 (Aung Kyaw Moe 16)
HT: 2-1

Dec 5 - Hanoi
Singapore 2 (Duric 62, Agu 90+3)
Myanmar 1 (Khin Maung Lwin 13)
HT: 0-1

Dec 5 - Hanoi
Vietnam 0
Philippines 2 (Greatwich 38, P Younghusband 78)
HT: 0-1

Dec 8 - Hanoi
Myanmar 0
Philippines 0

Dec 8 - Hanoi
Vietnam 1 (Nguyen Vu Phong 32)
Singapore 0
HT: 1-0
Sent off: Nguyen Trong Hoang (Vietnam) 64min

AFF CUP FINALS GROUP B	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Vietnam	3	2	0	1	8	3	6
Philippines	3	1	2	0	3	1	5
Singapore	3	1	1	1	3	3	4
Myanmar	3	0	1	2	2	9	1

Top two in both groups qualified for semi-finals

Semi-finals

1st legs

Dec 15 - Kuala Lumpur
Malaysia 2 (Safee 61, 80)
Vietnam 0
HT: 0-0

*Dec 16 - Jakarta**
Philippines 0
Indonesia 1 (Gonzales 32)
HT: 0-1
**Philippines h ome leg was played in Jakarta because they did not have a stadium that met competition standards*

2nd legs

Dec 18 - Hanoi
Vietnam 0
Malaysia 0
Malaysia 2-0 on agg
Sent off: Pham Thanh Luong (Vietnam) 73min

Dec 19 - Jakarta
Indonesia 1 (Gonzales 43)
Philippines 0
HT: 1-0
Indonesia 2-0 on agg
Sent off: Greatwich (Philippines) 87min

Final

1st leg

Dec 26 - Kuala Lumpur
Malaysia 3 (Safee 60, 72, Ashari 68)
Indonesia 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 85,000. **Ref:** Toma (Jap)
Malaysia: Khairul - Asraruddin, Rohidan, Kunanlan, Mahalli (Sabre 90), Amirulhadi (Ashari 53), Muslim, Fadhli, Safiq, Norshahrul, Safee (Amri 81).
Indonesia: Markus - Nasuha, Zulkifli, Maman, Hamka, Firman, Bustomi, Ridwan, Gonzales (Bambang 90), Oktavanius (Arif 72), Yongki (Irfan 65).

2nd leg

Dec 29 - Jakarta
Indonesia 2 (Nasuha 72, Ridwan 88)
Malaysia 1 (Safee 54)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 85,000. **Ref:** Green (Aus)
Malaysia 4-2 on agg
Indonesia: Markus - Maman, Hamka, Zulkifli, Ridwan, Nasuha, Firman (Eka 56), Bustomi, Arif (Tony 72), Irfan (Bambang 56), Gonzales.
Malaysia: Khairul - Asraruddin, Rohidan (Razman 62), Kunanlan, Sabre, Ashari (Amri 78), Muslim, Fadhli, Safiq, Norshahrul, Safee (Izzaq 90).

PREVIOUS WINNERS
(1996-2004 known as the Tiger Cup; 2007 as the ASEAN Football Championship)

1996	Thailand
1998	Singapore
2000	Thailand
2002	Thailand
2004	Singapore
2007	Singapore
2008	Vietnam

FRIENDLIES

Friday, December 10

Dec 10 - Antalya, Turkey
Bosnia-Herzegovina 2 (Subasic 23, Misimovic 55)
Poland 2 (Pawel Brozek 7, 52)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 100. **Ref:** Ogretmenoglu (Tur)
Bosnia-Herzegovina: Sehic (Avdukic 46) - Kerla (Vasilic 46), Subasic, Barisic (Torlak 58), Maletic, Ivankovic (Zahirovic 46), Dzakmic, Puric (Raspudic 61), Visca, Misimovic, Dzafic (Adilovic 46).
Poland: Sandomierski - Wojtkowiak, Wolakiewicz (Celeban 62), Jodlowiec, Sadlok (Kupisz 78), Mierzejewski, Kikut (Plizga 46), Rybus (Pawlowski 46), Borysiuk (Wilk 63), Grosicki, Pawel Brozek (Robak 63).

Thursday, December 16

Dec 16 - Doha
Qatar 2 (Soria 23, Gomaa og 43)
Egypt 1 (Soliman 72)
HT: 2-0
Egypt: A W El Sayed - Fathi, Gomaa (Naguib), Dewidar (Soliman), Fathalla, Farag (Abdelshafy), Awad (Fadhil), Salah (Al Solayya), Eid, Aboutraika, Geddo (Mekki).

Saturday, December 18

Dec 18 - Zhuhai
China 3 (Du Wei 17, Yu Hai 20, Yang Xu 38)
Estonia 0
HT: 3-0. **Att:** 8,500. **Ref:** Ko (SKo)
China: Zeng Cheng - Zhao Peng, Du Wei (Wang Qiang 46), Yang Xu, Deng Zhuoxiang, Qu Bo (Yu Dabao 46), Yu Tao, Zhang Linpeng, Yang Hao, Rong Hao, Yu Hai (Li Xuepeng 46).
Estonia: Londak (Meerits 89) - Jurgenson, Morozov, Sisov, Stepanov, Dmitrijev, Luts (Palatu 72), Vunk, Alliku (Dupikov 46), Konsa, Post (Voskoboinikov 62).

Dec 18 - San Pedro Sula
Honduras 2 (Leveron 7, 44)
Panama 1 (Aguilar 40)
HT: 2-1. **Ref:** Rodas (Gtm)
Honduras: Canales - Avila (Garcia 84), Norales, Leveron, Claros, Sabillon (Acevedo 75), De Leon, M Chavez (E Martinez 61), M Martinez (Delgado 84), L Ramirez (Bengtson 70), Welcome (Rojas 90+2).
Panama: Mejia - Vasquez (Machado 79), R Torres, Aguilar (Blackburn 82), Buitrago, Cummings (Bonaga 68), Cedeno, Ovalle (Davis 46), Godoy (Waterman 86), Velez (Herrera 57), Cooper.

Dec 18 - Sulaymaniyah
Iraq 0
Syria 1 (Dyab 86)
HT: 0-0

Wednesday, December 22

Dec 22 - Guangzhou
China 1 (Deng Zhuoxiang pen 90+4)
Macedonia 0
HT: 0-0
China: Yang Zhi - Zhang Linpeng, Zhao Xuri, Qu Bo, Wang Song, Gao Lin, Zhou Haibin, Rong Hao, Wang Qiang, Du Wei, Li Xuepeng.
Used subs: Deng Zhuoxiang, Liu Jianye, Yu Hanchao, Huang Bowen.
Macedonia: Bogatinov - Todorovski, Tanevski (Karcev), Mojsov (Stepanovski), Lazevski, Gligorov, Demiri, Alimi (Kralevski), Manevski (Ivanovski), Fetai (Stanceski), Kirovski (Hasani).

Dec 22 - Doha
Qatar 2 (Soria 37, Fabio Cesar 78)
Estonia 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Bertolini (Swi)
Qatar: Burahan - Ismael, Quaye, Fabio Cesar, Abdulmajid, Al Baloushi, Al Ghanim, Soria, Al Marri, Rajab, Al Sayed.
Estonia: Kotenko - Sisov, Morozov, Palatu, Dmitrijev, Voskoboinikov, Alliku, Oper, Vunk, Dupikov, Jurgenson.

Dec 22 - Damascus
Syria 0
Iraq 1 (Salam 88)
HT: 0-0

Friday, December 24

Dec 24 - 6th October City, Egypt
Kuwait 2 (Al Rashidi 29, Neda 90)
North Korea 1 (Ri Chol-myong 33)
HT: 1-1

Saturday, December 25

Dec 25 - Dubai
Bahrain 1 (Isa 90+4)
Uzbekistan 1 (Geynrikh 11)
HT: 0-1

Monday, December 27

Dec 27 - 6th October City, Egypt
Kuwait 2 (Ajab 23, Al Amer 57)
North Korea 2 (41, pen 82)
HT: 1-1

Tuesday, December 28

Dec 28 - Dubai, UAE
Jordan 1 (Suleiman 60)
Bahrain 2 (Aaish pen 31, Abdullatif 69)
HT: 0-1

Dec 28 - Doha
Qatar 0
Iran 0
Att: 3,000. **Ref:** Szabo (Hun)
Iran: Rahmati - Nosrati (K Heydari 46), J Hosseini, Aghili, Haddadifar (P Nouri 58), Teymourian, Nekounam, Shojaei (H Nowroozi 76), Hajsafy, R Nowroozi (Gholami 66), Khalatbary (G Rezaei 64).

Dec 28 - Dammam
Saudi Arabia 0
Iraq 1 (Younis 25)
HT: 0-1

CLUB WORLD CUP

African runners-up make history

TP MAZEMBE'S achievement in becoming the first team from outside Europe and South America to reach the Club World Cup Final ought to have been the highlight of the 2010 tournament in Abu Dhabi – and no doubt it was in the eyes of Africans – but elsewhere it was overshadowed by the sacking of Internazionale coach Rafa Benitez after the tournament (see Headliners, page 16).

Inter were worthy winners and, on the form they showed in the UAE, they would probably have also beaten Internacional had the Brazilian team reached the Final as had been expected.

Benitez went to the Gulf with his position in question after a difficult start to the season in which Inter had already been beaten seven times in all competitions – the same number Jose Mourinho's treble winners lost in the whole of the previous campaign.

However, Inter's ageing squad added the world title to the European, Serie A and Italian Cup crowns they won under Mourinho, in what was a fitting pinnacle for the likes of Javier Zanetti, Lucio and Dejan Stankovic as veterans of many Inter battles, and for Samuel Eto'o who overshadowed his fellow Africans in the Final.

While football fever may be on the rise in the Emirates, it is still very much centred on the big names of the game – such as Lionel Messi in 2009 and Eto'o in 2010 – and the size of the crowds at the matches in the Mohammed bin Zayed and Zayed Sports City stadiums were a reflection of this. When Inter came into the fray, their crowd topped 35,000.

DR Congo's Mazembe had virtually no neutral support in the Final even though their progress had thrilled the locals – in particular their shock semi-final victory against Internacional when they scored

Going flat out...Kabangu is swamped by team-mates after giving Mazembe the lead against Internacional

Another day, another trophy...jubilant Internazionale

Third place will have to do...Internacional's Alecsandro (second right) scores in the play-off against Seongnam Ilwha Chunma

brilliant goals through Mulota Kabangu and Dioko Kaluyituka, who was runner-up to Eto'o in the vote for player of the tournament.

Andres D'Alessandro was voted the third best after Libertadores Cup holders Internacional routed Asian champions Seongnam Ilhwa Chunma of South Korea 4-2 in the third-place play-off, overcoming the finishing shortcomings of their performance against Mazembe.

Mazembe earned their place in the Final by adding some tactical discipline in defence to their exuberance in attack, having learnt from their experience playing in the previous year's tournament when they were beaten for fifth place by Auckland City, who had confounded the odds by progressing beyond the preliminary match in which the champions of Oceania meet the Emirates league title holders.

Al Wahda went into the 2010 tournament with the burden of having to make up for Al Ahli's failure in 2009 when they lost to Auckland. And the team from the UAE took time to settle against surprise Oceania representatives Hekari United of Papua New Guinea before goals from Brazilians Fernando Baiano and Hugo gave them a 3-0 win to spare the blushes of many people and the potential ire of the organisers.

Abu Dhabi wants the tournament back in 2013 after it returns to Japan for the next two editions. But while critics continue to question the format in which the European and South American champions are given a bye into the semi-finals, FIFA see no reason to change – despite Mazembe upsetting the apple cart this time round – as the tournament is squeezed into a small gap in the league calendar of the major footballing countries.

Holding this tournament in the Middle East in December may help FIFA work towards a "winter" World Cup in Qatar in 2022. The temperatures are a benign 22 to 25 degrees in the evening and never reached anywhere near double that which is the norm in the middle of the year in the region.

Rex Gowar

• For further details, see page 94

To the rescue...Al Wahda keeper Adel Al Hosani keeps Hekari United at bay

Chorus line...Al Wahda hail fans

Up for it...Seongnam's Cho Dong-keon (no9)

On top...Estudiantes' Marcos Rojo is buried under his jubilant team-mates after scoring against River Plate

ARGENTINA Tournament is poor but champions are good

WRONG refereeing decisions and a series of injuries had a lot to do in deciding the 2010-11 apertura, but that does not belittle the champions, Estudiantes, who suffered their fair share of such problems.

However, with several teams composed of too many young players just beginning to gain experience and veterans deemed surplus to requirements in Europe, the tournament was of poor quality. That said, experienced campaigners such as River Plate's Matias Almeyda, Juan Sebastian Veron of the champions and the league's top scorer Martin Palermo of Boca Juniors are all closing in on their 40th year but remained among the more influential performers.

A point behind clausura winners Argentinos Juniors last time out, Estudiantes looked weaker this time round following the sale of Jose Sosa, Christian Cellay, Clemente Rodriguez, Marcos Angeleri and Mauro Boselli. But with just eight goals conceded they once again had the strongest defence. And while some said that Estudiantes played negatively, they finished only one goal short of top scorers Velez Sarsfield's 33. They also won all their "home" games despite never playing at the Estadio Jorge Luis Hirschi because it was being refurbished.

A goalless final game would have meant a play-off but Veron substituted himself with Hernan Lopez, who broke the deadlock

Coach Alejandro Sabella deserves credit for maintaining high standards after losing so many players, but he had an on-field general in Veron who, with the last game of the season goalless against Arsenal with 30 minutes to play – which would have meant a play-off with Velez – substituted himself with Hernan Lopez who broke the deadlock with two headed goals.

Velez, with their two-pronged attack of Santiago Silva – who returned after a loan spell at last season's apertura winners Banfield – and Juan Martinez scoring two-thirds of their goals, finished two points behind. As usual, they made little investment in the transfer market and had the fewest team changes from match to match.

Boca Juniors and River Plate will again be absent from international cups next year.

River changed coaches half-way through the campaign. Angel Cappa had the team around mid-table, but this was not good enough as they were in the relegation zone due to poor performances in previous seasons. Former River midfielder and junior-team co-ordinator Juan Jose Lopez took over as interim coach and saw the team collect 13 points from the last six games to move up to fourth and just out of the relegation zone. Lopez has now been given the job full time and, with a number of very promising youngsters breaking through and getting offers from big European clubs, River will be looking for a better showing in 2011.

Champion finish...Veron hoists trophy

Boca also changed coaches in midstream – which is not unusual for the club who crave success all the time, even though they have been without it for a while. Claudio Borghi, who took Argentinos Juniors to last season's

Emotion...Silva (left) and Martinez celebrate a Velez goal

clausura title, was signed for the season. However, he insisted on a three-man defence, as at his old club, with which Boca were never comfortable and he was unable to utilise his usual attacking style as iconic striker Palermo was virtually guaranteed a starting place.

Borghi used to say Palermo was excellent inside the penalty area and a disaster outside it, and as a result Boca relied mainly on a stream of high balls into the area for Palermo's head. He did get a few goals, however, netting the 300th of his career in the tournament's last game.

Borghi was replaced by reserve-team coach Tito Pompei – who fared no better – and Banfield's Julio Cesar Falcioni will lead them in the clausura.

Boca also suffered from a poor transfer policy. Before the apertura they were the biggest spenders – at £8.5million – but this did not improve the team. It might have been different, even for Borghi, if playmaker Juan Roman Riquelme – so often their trump card – had not been injured. The league's highest-paid star played only one whole game – admittedly well – and as a result gave part of the first six months of his salary back to the club to invest in dressing-room improvements.

Banfield, having lost Silva and with outstanding Colombian midfielder James Rodriguez moving to Europe, struggled and finished without a win in their last five games, while Argentinos Juniors, under new coach Pedro Troglio, paid for a poor start and could do no better than 12th place.

The revelations were Arsenal in third and fifth-placed Godoy Cruz – both clubs achieving their best-ever positions. The latter played some of the best football with quick passing, good movement and an attacking outlook under coach Omar Asad, but will begin the clausura without him. Asad asked for too much money to stay on which exceeded the club's strict budget.

After years of worry, Racing finally finished with no relegation problems, thanks chiefly to Colombian midfielder Giovanni Moreno, the costliest buy of the close season.

Independiente must beat Tigre in the apertura's final game – due to be played in February after the original fixture was postponed – to avoid finishing bottom. But at least they pulled out something special in beating Brazil's Goias to win the Sudamericana Cup.

Nine coaches left their clubs during the tournament, but there are more changes for the clausura. Despite seven successive defeats near the end of the apertura, San Lorenzo's Ramon Diaz was not one of them, though he has threatened to quit if adequate reinforcements are not obtained.

Gimnasia La Plata, in financial crisis, had not paid September's salaries by the end of November. The players did, however, continue to turn out knowing that, with the club in the relegation zone, they will be worse off if they go down.

Eric Weil

COACH OF THE SEASON
ALEJANDRO SABELLA
(Estudiantes)
Must take special credit for winning the 2010 apertura after four top players were transferred abroad.

Leading from front...Sabella

NEWCOMER OF THE SEASON
ERIK LAMELA (River Plate)
Now 18, the attacking midfielder has been tracked by Europe's top clubs since the age of 11. River convinced his parents to keep him in Argentina by promising them a percentage of any future transfer. Has now made several first-team appearances and managed to shine in a poor side.

Racing's inspiration...Moreno

PLAYER OF THE SEASON
GIOVANNI MORENO (Racing)
A £2.7million buy from Atletico Nacional in his homeland, the Colombia midfielder was chiefly responsible for getting his club clear of relegation danger after three years with his intelligent distribution and goals.

He shall not pass...Arsenal's Jorge Ortiz dives in to halt Rogelio Funes Mori of River Plate

APERTURA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Estudiantes (LC)	19	14	3	2	32	8	45
Velez	19	13	4	2	33	9	43
Arsenal	19	9	5	5	22	19	32
River Plate	19	8	7	4	21	18	31
Godoy Cruz	19	7	8	4	32	25	29
Racing	19	8	5	6	25	18	29
Lanus	19	8	4	7	20	25	28
All Boys	19	7	5	7	24	23	26
Newell's	19	6	8	5	13	12	26
Colon	19	7	5	7	21	29	26
Boca Juniors	19	7	4	8	20	20	25
Argentinos Jrs	19	6	6	7	22	21	24
San Lorenzo	19	6	6	7	18	20	24
Tigre	18	6	4	8	23	24	22
Banfield	19	4	8	7	20	19	20
Quilmes	19	4	7	8	14	23	19
Olimpo	19	5	3	11	18	26	18
Huracan	19	4	4	11	16	33	16
Gimnasia LP	19	3	6	10	13	23	15
Independiente	18	2	8	8	13	25	14

(LC) Libertadores Cup

BOLIVIA

Oriente triumph

NATURALISED Argentinian coach Gustavo Quinteros, who has now taken charge of Bolivia's national team, led Oriente Petrolero to the clausura title with a 1-1 draw away to The Strongest on the final day of the campaign.

Jhasmani Campos' 23rd-minute goal was enough to earn the visitors a point in La Paz and finish four points clear of Bolivar, who were beaten 2-0 at Blooming.

It was a miserable season for apertura winners Jorge Wilstermann, who did so badly in the closing championship that their points average saw them relegated for the first time in their history.

Next season they will play in the semi-professional regional Cochabamba league as there is no national second division in Bolivia. They will also become the first non-top-flight side to play in the Libertadores Cup.

Bolivar also qualified for the Libertadores, while Aurora, who pipped San Jose for third place on goal difference, go into the Sudamericana Cup.

CLAUSURA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Oriente (LC)	22	12	4	6	38	26	40
Bolivar (LC)	22	10	6	6	37	28	36
Aurora (SC)	22	10	4	8	34	30	34
San Jose	22	10	4	8	39	37	34
Guabira	22	9	5	8	22	28	32
Blooming	22	9	4	9	28	26	31
Real Potosi	22	8	5	9	38	35	29
The Strongest*	22	10	2	10	37	36	29
Mamore	22	7	7	8	21	30	28
La Paz	22	7	5	10	33	36	26
Wil mann (R)	22	5	7	10	26	32	22
Universitario	22	5	7	10	24	33	22

**3pts deducted for fielding more than the maximum 3 foreign players in a game*
(LC) Libertadores Cup, (SC) Sudamericana Cup, (R) Relegated

Champion...Quinteros

PLAYER OF THE SEASON
WILLIAM FERREIRA (Bolivar)
Uruguayan striker whose 14 goals made him the league top scorer for the third time, having previously topped the apertura and clausura charts in 2009.

COACH OF THE SEASON
GUSTAVO QUINTEROS (Oriente Petrolero)
Took the club to a fourth Bolivian championship within 12 months of taking charge.

NEWCOMER OF THE SEASON
RUDY CARDOZO (Bolivar)
Product of the prestigious Tahuichi Academy, he spent some time in Israeli football before returning home and showing promise with Bolivar. A busy, versatile performer who can operate behind the strikers, across the midfield or even as an attacking full-back.

CHILE

Conflict of interests in domestic game

CHILEAN football reached a crossroads it could have done without at the end of 2010, with a veritable club-versus-country conflict.

It was not the usual spat in which clubs are unhappy about the amount of time players spend with their country's national team or even the lack of time the national coach gets with the players or issues over compensation if a player is injured playing for his country.

It was about club power. The clubs felt that under FA president Harold Mayne-Nicholls they had lacked power and money as Marcelo Bielsa's national team were given priority.

Consequently, Mayne-Nicholls lost the December presidential election to Spaniard Jorge Segovia as the majority of the top-flight clubs ganged up against the association. Segovia was later declared ineligible to hold office due to personal business interests in his club, Union Espanola, and a new leader was set to be elected in January.

Following the devastating earthquake early in the apertura, the double-championship format was dropped and the season became a single calendar-long competition.

A bonus was an exciting and unexpected finish as Universidad de Chile squandered a seven-point lead to allow Universidad Catolica, under former Spain striker Juan Antonio Pizzi, to snatch the crown at the wire with a 5-0 win over Everton – who were relegated just a year after playing in the Libertadores Cup.

Universidad de Chile, who finished fourth, replaced coach Gerardo Pelussa with Jorge Sampaoli at the end of the season. An impressive run by Audax Italiano saw them finish third behind outgoing title-holders Colo Colo.

San Luis were relegated along with Everton and replaced by northern clubs Municipal Iquique and Union La Calera.

The top flight reverts to an apertura and a clausura this year that will include title play-offs in both.

Rex Gower

Cup clash...Catolica (white) take on Universidad de Chile in the Libertadores Cup

PLAYER OF THE SEASON
MAURO OLIVI (Audax Italiano)
Argentinian who was the league's second top goalscorer with 18.

COACH OF THE SEASON
OMAR LABRUNA (Audax Italiano)
Son of River Plate's Angel Labruna, he took charge in July after the club had made a poor start and went on a 14-match unbeaten run.

NEWCOMER OF THE SEASON
SEBASTIAN TORO (Colo Colo)
Defender who has come up through the ranks in Santiago and enjoyed his breakthrough year in 2010. Injuries forced him to play at centre-back and he made an immediate impression.

PRIMERA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Univ Catolica (LC)	34	23	5	6	77	39	74
Colo Colo (LC)	34	22	5	7	67	34	71
Audax Italiano	34	20	5	9	75	58	65
Univ Chile	34	20	4	10	75	48	64
Espanola (LC)	34	14	10	10	58	50	52
Huachipato	34	12	12	10	44	40	48
La Serena	34	13	6	15	45	59	45
Wanderers	34	12	9	13	48	52	45
San Felipe	34	12	7	15	38	47	43
Cobresal	34	12	6	16	47	52	42
Palestino	34	11	9	14	35	41	42
O Higgins	34	10	11	13	46	44	41
Nublense	34	9	13	12	54	66	40
Cobreloa	34	10	9	15	45	47	39
U Concepcion	34	9	11	14	39	50	38
Morning	34	9	9	16	34	45	36
Everton (R)	34	8	10	16	38	58	34
San Luis (R)	34	5	9	20	36	71	24

(LC) Libertadores Cup, (R) Relegated

Promoted: Municipal Iquique, Union La Calera

COLOMBIA Caldas come from behind to win

Ticker-tape triumph...Once Caldas celebrate their title success in Manizales

ONCE CALDAS overturned a 2-1 deficit from the first leg to beat regular-season winners and Sudamericana Cup quarter-finalists Deportes Tolima 4-3 on aggregate in the Finalizacion Play-off Final.

Dayro Moreno had given Caldas a sixth-minute lead from the penalty spot at the Estadio Manuel Murillo Toro in Ibague, before the hosts hit back with goals from the competition's top scorer Wilder Medina and Rodrigo Marangoni.

However, Jaime Castrillon, Fernando Uribe and Wilson Asprilla were all on target in the home leg to put Caldas firmly in the driving seat, even if a late reply from Danny Aguilar did make for a nervous final few minutes in Manizales.

Caldas' reward for winning their fourth national title is to enter this year's Libertadores Cup in Group 1, alongside Peru's San Martin, Paraguayan champions Libertad and San Luis of Mexico. Tolima must get past Corinthians in the preliminary stage to enter Group 7.

Cortulua were relegated as the team with the worst points average over the past three seasons, while the club with the next poorest record, Envigado, made their place safe with wins at home and away over Deportivo Pasto in the promotion/relegation play-off.

Wing raider...Moreno

PLAYER OF THE SEASON
DAYRO MORENO (Once Caldas)
The baby of the Caldas side that were shock winners of the 2004 Libertadores Cup, the 25-year-old has matured into the most decisive player in Colombian football, marauding down either wing.

COACH OF THE SEASON
JUAN CARLOS OSORIO (Once Caldas)
The Colombian returned home last year after coaching extensively in the United States and had Caldas up and running from the off.

NEWCOMER OF THE SEASON
FERNANDO URIBE (Once Caldas)
His goals for the champions earned him a call-up to the national side.

FINALIZACION: REGULAR SEASON

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Tolima (CL)	18	11	3	4	35	15	36
Once Caldas (CL)	18	11	3	4	34	26	36
Ind Santa Fe (SC)	18	10	5	3	26	13	35
Nacional	18	10	3	5	25	23	33
Quindio	18	9	4	5	25	20	31
Huila	18	8	6	4	28	24	30
Cucuta	18	8	4	6	24	18	28
La Equidad (SC)	18	8	4	6	23	23	28
Dep Cali	18	6	8	4	31	23	26
America	18	7	4	7	25	23	25
Ind Medellin	18	5	9	4	22	22	24
Millonarios	18	6	4	8	25	25	22
Chico	18	5	6	7	16	26	21
Junior (CL)	18	2	10	6	21	28	16
Cartagena	18	3	6	9	17	29	15
Cortulua (R)	18	3	4	11	14	30	13
Pereira	18	0	9	9	12	22	9
Envigado	18	1	6	11	19	32	9

(LC) Libertadores Cup, (SC) Sudamericana Cup, (R) Relegated

FINALIZACION PLAY-OFFS: GP A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Tolima	6	3	2	1	11	9	11
Ind Santa Fe	6	3	1	2	8	6	10
Huila	6	2	1	3	9	10	7
La Equidad	6	1	2	3	4	7	5

FINALIZACION PLAY-OFFS: GP B

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Once Caldas	6	4	1	1	14	7	13
Cucuta	6	2	3	1	7	6	9
Quindio	6	2	0	4	7	12	6
Nacional	6	1	2	3	9	12	5

Play-off Final: Tolima v Once Caldas 2-1, 1-3 (agg 3-4)

ECUADOR LDU hold on to win championship

LDU QUITO won their 10th national title with a 2-1 aggregate victory over first-stage winners Emelec in the overall championship Final.

Having won 2-0 at home thanks to two goals from Miller Bolanos, the 2008 continental champions conceded a solitary goal in Guayaquil, to David Quiroz on the hour. They did, however, have first-leg hero Bolanos sent off in injury time in the return for a foul on Leandro Torres, while goalkeeper Jose Cevallos was also shown a red card after the final whistle for verbally abusing the referee. The 39-year-old international had been booked near the end for time wasting.

The university team did not have an outstanding campaign, but Argentinian coach Edgardo Bauza had them well drilled and skipper Neicer Reasco was a key ingredient in their defence.

Veteran midfielder Ulises De la Cruz also excelled, while Uruguayan forward Juan Manuel Salgueiro and his Argentinian strike partner Hernan Barcos both played their part.

Despite losing 3-1 to Barcelona in Guayaquil in the return leg of their match for third place, Deportivo Quito pipped their opponents to the country's final berth in this year's Libertadores Cup on the away-goals rule, having won the home leg 2-0 with goals by Luis Checa and Luis Saritama.

If they beat Independiente in their first-stage game, they will join LDU, Penarol of Uruguay and Argentina's Godoy Cruz in Group 8, while Emelec are in Group 6 with holders Internacional of Brazil, Jorge Wilstermann of Bolivia and either Mexico's Jaguares or Alianza Lima of Peru.

SERIE A: SECOND STAGE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
LDU Quito (LC)	22	14	5	3	42	17	47
Emelec (LC)	22	13	7	2	29	12	46
Cuenca	22	12	5	5	32	25	41
Dep Quito (LC)	22	11	4	7	35	22	37
Barcelona	22	8	6	8	25	24	30
El Nacional	22	8	5	9	23	23	29
Manta	22	7	6	9	23	33	27
Espoli	22	5	8	9	22	28	23
Olmedo	22	6	5	11	20	33	23
Macara (R)*	22	5	6	11	21	32	21
U Catolica (R)*	22	5	5	12	27	37	20
Independiente	22	5	4	13	23	36	19

**Relegation based on points gained for first and second stages combined*

(LC) Libertadores Cup, (R) Relegated

Promoted: Imbabura, LDU Loja

Overall championship Final
LDU Quito v Emelec 2-0, 0-1 (agg 2-1)

Thank heavens...top scorer Ayovi

PLAYER OF THE SEASON
JAIME AYOVI (Emelec)
The league's top scorer with 23 goals over both stages, the 22-year-old was called into the national team in September and scored on his debut against Mexico.

COACH OF THE SEASON
EDGARDO BAUZA (LDU Quito)
Libertadores-winning boss who returned to the club in December 2009 after a spell in Saudi Arabia with Al Nassr.

NEWCOMER OF THE SEASON
MARLON DE JESUS (El Nacional)
Ten goals in 16 games earned the 19-year-old rave reviews and he has agreed a deal to join Russian club Rubin Kazan.

PERU Three out of four for San Martin

SAN MARTIN won the national title for the third time in four years, beating Leon 3-2 on aggregate in the play-off Final.

The first leg in Huanuco was marred by a mass brawl involving players and technical staff, and the sending off of two players from each side.

An equaliser from German Alemanno in the third minute of injury time cancelled out Carlos Zegarra's opening goal for Leon and meant San Martin travelled back to Lima full of confidence for the return four days later.

Pedro Garcia headed home John Hinostroza's cross and Argentinian striker Pablo Vitti struck from a free-kick to put the hosts two up after 25 minutes and, though Leon hit back with a 28th-minute penalty from Luis Perea, San Martin held on for victory.

"We were a great team, a great squad, that's why we have this happiness," said the club's Uruguayan coach Anibal Ruiz.

Ruiz's side now go into a Libertadores Cup group containing Libertad of Paraguay, Mexico's San Luis and Once Caldas of Colombia.

Meanwhile, Leon are in a group with Colombia's Junior, Oriente Petrolero of Bolivia and either Brazil's Gremio or Liverpool of Uruguay. Alianza Lima must play off against Mexico's Jaguares to reach the group stage.

Jose Galvez FBC and Total Chalaco finished in 15th and 16th place respectively in the aggregate table and were relegated. They are replaced by Segunda Division champions Cobresol and the winners of the Copa Peri, Union Comercio.

Done it...Ruiz and midfielder Ronald Quinteros

PLAYER OF THE SEASON
HEBER ARRIOLA (San Martin)
Argentinian who was signed from Nacional of Paraguay at the start of the season and finished the league's top scorer, with 24 goals as his side took the title.

COACH OF THE SEASON
ANIBAL RUIZ (San Martin)
South American coach of the year in 2005, the 68-year-old joined San Martin in January last year and led them to their third national title.

NEWCOMER OF THE SEASON
IRVEN AVILA (Huancayo)
Still only 20, but has been a first-choice striker for his club for the past two seasons.

LIGUILLA A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
S Martin* (LC)	44	28	7	9	87	39	92
Al Lima (LC)	44	22	12	10	70	48	78
Uni tario** (SC)	44	21	11	12	55	31	72
S Cristal	44	18	10	16	58	54	64
Inti Gas	44	17	5	22	63	69	56
CNI	44	16	8	20	58	71	56
J Galvez (R)	44	10	13	21	31	68	43
T Ch co*** (R)	44	10	12	22	41	64	40

**1pt bonus because their youth/reserve team were runners-up in the first stage of their league*
***2pts deducted for failing to pay a former coach*
****2pts deducted for failing to pay a former player*

LIGUILLA B

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Leon (CL)	44	24	9	11	77	44	81
C Vallejo* (SC)	44	19	11	14	64	48	70
Juan Aurich (SC)	44	19	11	14	62	47	68
Huancayo	44	17	8	19	64	60	59
Sport Boys	44	15	8	21	54	78	53
Melgar	44	13	11	20	53	72	50
Cienciano**	44	13	10	21	50	69	47
Al Atletico	44	10	14	20	45	71	44

**2pts bonus because their youth/reserve team won the 1st stage of their league*
***2pts deducted for failing to pay a former player*
(LC) Libertadores Cup, (SC) Sudamerican Cup, (R) Relegated

Play-off Final
Leon v San Martin 1-1, 1-2 (agg 2-3)
Promoted: Cobresol, Union Comercio

PARAGUAY Libertad march on

Family fortunes...Libertad get in party mood after winning the clausura

NACIONAL and Guarani may have won the last two titles, but normal service was resumed in the clausura as Cerro Porteno and Libertad – who had won the previous 10 championships between them – took the title race to the wire.

Libertad replaced Argentinian coach Javier Torrente – who joined Cerro – with Uruguay's Gregorio Perez in April, and initially it seemed that Libertad had made a more cautious choice. At Cerro, Torrente fashioned a solid side built around the firepower of his compatriot Roberto Nanni and they suffered just two defeats in the whole of the campaign. But even though Libertad were beaten five times, their free-scoring side, who were full of speed on the break, won 16 times to Cerro's 13 – a figure which would prove decisive.

Derby clash...Olimpia (white) v Cerro

Cerro Porteno went into the last round trailing by a point. They could only draw 1-1 away to Sport Colombia, while Libertad sealed their 15th title in emphatic fashion with a 5-0 win over 3 de Febrero.

Libertad chairman Horacio Cartes – a powerful businessman who has his eye on the presidency of the country – said afterwards: "All the teams had their ups and downs but we were the best, deserving champions."

Libertad now go into their ninth consecutive Libertadores Cup campaign with optimism. They have a collection of dangerous strikers, some pace down the flanks and, providing he stays put, Victor Caceres to protect the defence and impose order from midfield. There are signs, though, that veteran centre-back Pedro Sarabia, a quality player, has reached the stage where his lack of pace needs to be protected.

It is now 10 years since Olimpia, Paraguay's oldest and most successful club, last won the domestic title. The 38-time champions finished 17 points behind Libertad in fifth place.

The only team to have appeared in a Libertadores Cup Final in every decade since its inception, Olimpia have not qualified for the tournament since 2004 and have reappointed the veteran Luis Cubilla as coach.

Relegation is worked out on an average of points accumulated over three years, and Sport Colombia and Trinidense both went down after short spells back in the top flight.

Tim Vickery

CLAUSURA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Libertad (CL)	22	16	1	5	46	15	49
Cerro Porteno (SC)	22	13	7	2	36	18	46
Nacional (SC)	22	12	6	4	29	18	42
Guarani (CL)	22	10	6	6	29	22	36
Olimpia (SC)	22	7	11	4	31	23	32
Rubio Nu	22	7	7	8	25	32	28
Colombia (R)	22	5	9	8	23	30	24
Tacuary	22	6	5	11	20	29	23
Sol America	22	5	5	12	20	28	20
3 de Febrero	22	4	7	11	19	34	19
Trinidense (R)	22	3	9	10	25	46	18
Luqueno	22	2	11	9	21	29	17

(CL) Copa Libertadores, (SC) Sudamericana Cup, (R) Relegated

Promoted: General Caballero, Independiente

PLAYER OF THE YEAR
VICTOR CACERES (Libertad)
It is surprising that one of Paraguay's World Cup stalwarts is still based at home. Not the most eye-catching of players, but his defensive awareness, power in the air and willingness to take responsibility on the ball make the central midfielder vital in balancing the team.

COACH OF THE YEAR
FRANCISCO ARCE (Rubio Nu)
The former international right-back carried the tiny Asuncion club into the first division and, with a squad largely composed of either veterans or youngsters, consolidated their place with a thoroughly respectable sixth-place finish.

NEWCOMER OF THE YEAR
ANGEL ORUE (Libertad)
Injuries meant this lanky left-footed attacker was thrown into the deep end during the clausura. He faded towards the end but made an excellent contribution, finishing as the club's top scorer with 10 goals.

URUGUAY Defensor leave it late

ENGENDERED by the World Cup, the feel-good factor in Uruguayan football was extended by the apertura, with five clubs going into the 15th and final round still having a chance of winning the title.

Of these, Penarol had won the 2009-10 championship in style, but had lost some of their swagger since. Diego Aguirre was replaced as coach by Manuel Keosseian, and after some player sales the new Penarol looked much more ponderous – so much so that Aguirre returns in 2011.

Great rivals Nacional also had problems. A run of two wins in seven games cost coach Luis Gonzalez his job. The replacement was the former national team boss, the ultra-attacking Juan Ramon Carrasco.

APERTURA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Defensor	15	9	3	3	31	13	30
Nacional	15	8	5	2	28	18	29
Bella Vista	15	9	2	4	24	18	29
Tanque Sisley	15	8	4	3	21	18	28
Danubio	15	7	5	3	24	14	26
Penarol	15	7	4	4	24	17	25
Wanderers	15	5	6	4	20	16	21
Liverpool	15	5	6	4	18	19	21
Cerro	15	4	7	4	15	16	19
Fenix	15	4	6	5	20	20	18
River Plate	15	5	3	7	16	23	18
C Espanol	15	4	5	6	21	25	17
Racing	15	3	5	7	14	20	14
Rampla	15	2	6	7	19	28	12
M Misiones	15	2	5	8	15	23	11
Tacuarembo	15	1	2	12	10	32	5

Floored...Defensor's Diego De Souza leaves Alejandro Lembo of Nacional floundering

Also in the title fight on the last day were two newly promoted teams, Bella Vista and Tanque Sisley, the surprise package of the tournament.

The fifth team in the race were neither giant nor minnow. Defensor Sporting traditionally belong in the supporting cast of the Penarol-Nacional double act, but over the last few years they have aspired to be something more.

Goalkeeper Martin Silva was one of only two home-based players in Uruguay's World Cup squad, while left-footed playmaker Diego De Souza has a touch of quality – in 2009 his goal in the Bonbonera ended Boca Juniors' last Libertadores campaign – and striker Rodolfo Mora is a perky presence in and around the penalty box.

Defensor went into decision day with a one-point advantage. They travelled to bottom club Tacuarembo, the only team in the current first division based outside Montevideo, and came back with a 3-0 victory. It was just as well, because, although Penarol lost, the other three contenders all won their games, leaving Defensor a point clear at the final whistle.

Defensor will now meet the clausura winners in June for the right to be champions of the 2010-11 season.

Tim Vickery

PLAYER OF THE SEASON
SANTIAGO GARCIA (Nacional)

On the bench for the first two games, he was given his chance in round three and there was no looking back as his pace, power and aggression brought him 15 goals in the remaining 13 games, four more than the club's next highest scorer.

COACH OF THE SEASON
PAULO REPETTO (Defensor)
Steered little Cerro through a satisfactory Libertadores Cup campaign in the first semester, then took Defensor to apertura glory in the second. It could have been even better as Defensor came agonisingly close to knocking out eventual champions Independiente of Argentina in the Sudamericana Cup.

NEWCOMER OF THE SEASON
FEDERICO RODRIGUEZ (Bella Vista)
Lanky centre forward who made a big impression in his debut campaign in the top flight, scoring nine goals. Good with both feet and in the air, he has now joined Penarol.

VENEZUELA Tachira – by a goal

VICTORY over their closest challengers Esppor in the penultimate game of the season should have all but sealed the opening championship for Deportivo Tachira.

Goals from Yonathan Del Valle and Sergio Herrera – in a bad-tempered game that left both sides with 10 men – meant Tachira went into the final round of games two points clear. However, after they struggled to a goalless draw at Deportivo Petare, it was only Esporr's inability to add a further goal to their 2-0 scoreline against Yaracuyanos that prevented a play-off and handed Colombian coach Jorge Luis Pintos' side the title on goal difference.

Perfect four...Pinto

PLAYER OF THE SEASON
DANIEL ARISMENDI (Anzoategui)
His 13 goals made him the apertura's leading scorer in the league's highest-scoring side.

COACH OF THE SEASON
JORGE LUIS PINTO (Tachira)
Has now been champion in four countries, adding the Venezuelan title to those he won in Peru (Alianza Lima), Costa Rica (Alajuelense) and Colombia (Cucuta Deportivo).

NEWCOMER OF THE SEASON
YOHANDRY OROZCO (Zulia)
Nineteen-year-old striker who scored eight goals in 15 appearances in the apertura and also made his mark in the national side.

APERTURA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Tachira (LC)	17	10	6	1	31	11	36
Esppor	17	11	3	3	30	11	36
Caracas	17	11	2	4	24	15	35
Petare	17	9	6	2	25	17	33
Trujillanos	17	7	6	4	22	15	27
Aragua	17	8	3	6	22	20	27
Anzoategui	17	7	5	5	35	30	26
Yaracuyanos	17	6	8	3	20	17	26
Estudiantes	17	6	4	7	18	22	22
Zulia	17	6	3	8	25	27	21
Mineros	17	4	8	5	20	20	20
Monagas	17	4	5	8	25	25	17
Lara	17	3	7	7	23	28	16
Carabobo	17	3	7	7	15	21	16
At Venezuela	17	4	4	9	22	33	16
El Vigia	17	2	8	7	18	25	14
Zamora	17	3	5	9	17	30	14
Caroni	17	3	2	12	10	35	11

(LC) Libertadores Cup

MEXICO Monterrey make it two out of three

MONTERREY were crowned Mexican champions for the fourth time in their history after defeating Santos Laguna with a 5-3 aggregate victory in the Final of the apertura. This second victory in three tournaments was a fair reward for a team that displayed the most exciting style in the league.

The architect of their success was coach Victor Manuel Vucetich, who was widely considered to be the ideal candidate to take charge of the national team after the World Cup but turned down the job citing family reasons, deciding to focus on his Monterrey side and making himself a hero to the club's passionate fans.

Monterrey were undoubtedly the most consistent team in the league. They finished the regular season in second place and then went undefeated in the play-offs before losing 2-1 in the first leg of the Final at Santos Laguna. They bounced back in style, winning the return leg 3-0 in a one-sided affair.

However, as the regular season finished, the favourite tag belonged to Cruz Azul. After 17 matches, the "Celestes" finished first in the table, seven points ahead of Monterrey and 14 ahead of arch-rivals Pumas, who qualified in eighth place, but then proceeded to deservedly upset the leaders in the quarter-finals. After disappointing their fans yet again, Cruz Azul have now gone 13 years without winning a championship, coming agonizingly close several times already.

In the semi-finals, Monterrey defeated Pumas with two goals in the final minutes of the return leg, while Santos Laguna easily disposed of big-shots America.

Former Birmingham City flop Christian Benitez was the league's top scorer, finding the net 16 times for Santos Laguna.

Martin Del Palacio Langer

Outnumbered...Monterrey's Jesus Zavala (left) and Hiram Mier get the better of Santos' Fernando Arce in the second leg of the Final

Return...Suazo

PLAYER OF THE SEASON
HUMBERTO SUAZO (Monterrey)
After a short spell in Spain with Real Zaragoza, he returned to Mexico and scored 15 goals in 21 games, including two in the Final.

COACH OF THE SEASON
VICTOR MANUEL VUCETICH (Monterrey)
A fifth league title makes him the third-most successful coach of all time in Mexican football.

NEWCOMER OF THE SEASON
CARLOS PENA (Pachuca)
A winger who not only has the speed and technique but, as his "Hulk" nickname suggests, he also has physical acumen.

Seeing red...Horacio Cervantes of Cruz Azul is sent-off against Pumas in the quarter-finals

APERTURA REGULAR SEASON, GROUP 1

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Monterrey	17	9	5	3	29	20	32
Santos	17	9	3	5	28	19	30
Tigres	17	6	6	5	24	16	24
Guadalajara	17	4	10	3	16	15	22
Necaxa	17	4	4	9	14	21	16
Tecos	17	4	3	10	18	36	15

APERTURA REGULAR SEASON, GROUP 2

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
America	17	7	6	4	22	16	27
San Luis	17	8	2	7	21	19	26
Pachuca	17	7	4	6	27	28	25
Toluca	17	5	7	5	18	20	22
Atlante	17	4	4	9	17	27	16
Atlas	17	3	4	10	18	27	13

APERTURA REGULAR SEASON, GROUP 3

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Cruz Azul	17	12	3	2	33	13	39
Jaguares	17	6	7	4	21	14	25
Pumas	17	7	4	6	23	24	25
Morelia	17	5	6	6	17	16	21
Puebla	17	5	4	8	21	26	19
Queretaro	17	5	4	8	18	28	19

Quarter-finals

Jaguares v Santos 1-1, 0-1 (agg 1-2)
Pachuca v Monterrey 1-1, 3-3 (agg 4-4; Monterrey qualified on better regular season record)
Pumas v Cruz Azul 1-2, 2-0 (agg 3-2)
San Luis v America 0-0, 1-4 (agg 1-4)

Semi-finals

America v Santos 1-2, 3-3 (agg 4-5)
Pumas v Monterrey 0-0, 0-2 (agg 0-2)

Final

Santos v Monterrey 3-2, 0-3 (agg 3-5)

PEOPLE in the news

Kop idol...Dalglish

EUROPE

Dalglish in charge again

KENNY DALGLISH took over as caretaker manager at Liverpool, replacing ROY HODGSON, who left "by mutual consent" after just six months at the club. Dalglish – who won the league three times and the FA Cup twice in a previous spell as the Reds' boss, between 1985 and 1991 – has been put in charge until the end of the season.

Former Milan boss LEONARDO replaced RAFAEL BENITEZ as coach of Internazionale. Despite having won the Italian Super Cup and Club World Cup this season, Spaniard Benitez was sacked after just six months in the job.

Swapping sides...Leonardo

Blackburn Rovers' new Indian owners, Venky's, sacked the Premier League club's manager SAM ALLARDYCE and his assistant, NEIL MCDONALD, the day after a 2-1 defeat away to Lancashire rivals Bolton Wanderers. Rovers had lost three of their last five games, including a 7-1 thrashing at Manchester United. The club's first-team coach, STEVE KEAN, was given his first managerial job and put in charge until the end of the season.

Turkish club Besiktas signed Portugal's HUGO ALMEIDA from Werder Bremen and SIMAO from Atletico Madrid. They also picked up MANUEL FERNANDES on loan from Valencia.

Having led Hoffenheim from the German third tier to the Bundesliga, RALF RANGNICK quit his position as coach after the club sold defender GUSTAVO LUIZ to Bayern Munich.

La Liga strugglers Malaga signed Spain Under-21 defensive midfielder Ignacio CAMACHO from Atletico Madrid. Goalkeeper SERGIO ASENJO made the same move on loan. The Spanish club also agreed deals for Roma's JULIO BAPTISTA and MARTIN DEMICHELIS of Bayern Munich.

Internazionale signed Italy defender ANDREA RANOCCHIA from Genoa. The 22-year-old won his first cap last year, in a friendly against Romania.

France defender ADIL RAMI was signed by Spanish side Valencia from Lille. However, he will stay with the Ligue 1 side until the end of the season.

Former Freiburg coach VOLKE FINKE will leave Japanese club Urawa Red Diamonds in February and take up the post of general manager with Bundesliga strugglers Koln.

Former Manchester United and Republic of Ireland captain ROY KEANE was sacked by English Championship side Ipswich Town after a run of seven defeats in nine games left his side three points above the relegation zone. Keane had joined the club in April 2009, five months after his resignation as manager of Sunderland.

Turkish trio...(left to right) Simao, Fernandes and Almeida

Austria defender MARTIN STRANZL joined bottom-of-the-table Bundesliga club Borussia Monchengladbach from Spartak Moscow.

New Bhoy...Ljungberg

Former Arsenal and Sweden striker FREDRIK LJUNGBERG joined Scottish Premier League leaders Celtic until the end of the season. The 33-year-old forward has spent the past two seasons playing for Seattle Sounders and Chicago Fire in the United States.

Stoke City made JERMAINE PENNANT'S loan into a permanent move, signing the winger from Real Zaragoza for £1.7million.

STUART MCCALL was appointed manager of Motherwell, replacing CRAIG BROWN, who quit the club for Scottish rivals Aberdeen.

Former Holland and Feyenoord winger COEN MOULIJN, who was a member of the club's 1970 European Cup-winning side, died aged 73 after a stroke.

Norway internationals PETTER VAAGAN MOEN and STEFFEN IVERSEN moved to the English Championship, joining Queens Park Rangers from Brann and Crystal Palace from Rosenborg respectively.

Manchester City signed ex-Barcelona youngster GAI ASSULIN on a free transfer.

On his way...Keane

DAVID BERNSTEIN, the former chairman of Manchester City, is the new chairman of the English Football Association.

Former Wales captain GARY SPEED left his position as manager of English second-tier side Sheffield United to take charge of his national side, who have been without a permanent boss since JOHN TOSHACK stepped down in September.

Country calling...Speed

Juventus signed veteran striker LUCA TONI from Genoa after losing Italy international FABIO QUAGLIARELLA for the remainder of the season with a knee injury.

Manchester United's 19-year-old Italian striker FEDERICO MACHEDA joined Sampdoria on loan for the rest of the season.

Samp loan...Macheda

Short stay...Garzitto

AFRICA

Mazembe hero quits new job

DIEGO GARZITTO, the man who led TP Mazembe of DR Congo to the 2009 African Champions League title, lasted just three months as coach of reigning Moroccan champions Wydad Casablanca.

FAOUZI BENZARTI has taken charge of Tunisia's national team for a third time, following the sacking of BERTRAND MARCHAND after two losses to minnows Botswana and a home draw with Malawi in the African Nations Cup qualifiers.

Zamalek striker SHIKABALA, who is an Egyptian of Nubian origin, announced he was quitting international football following the racist taunts he received from rival fans during a league match against Al Ahly.

Abuse...Shikabala (left) in action against Al Ahly

RABAH SAADANE, who led Algeria at last summer's World Cup finals, was appointed coach of Yemen for a second time.

Al Ahly reappointed MANUEL JOSE as coach. The Portuguese is considered the Egyptian club's most successful boss of all time with 18 trophies.

NABIL MAALOUL took over as coach of Esperance, succeeding MAHER KENZARI after just three games. The 48-year-old Maaloul, a former Esperance player, was assistant coach when the Tunisian national team won the CAF Africa Cup of Nations in 2004.

LITO VIDIGAL succeeded caretaker ZECA AMARAL as coach of Angola.

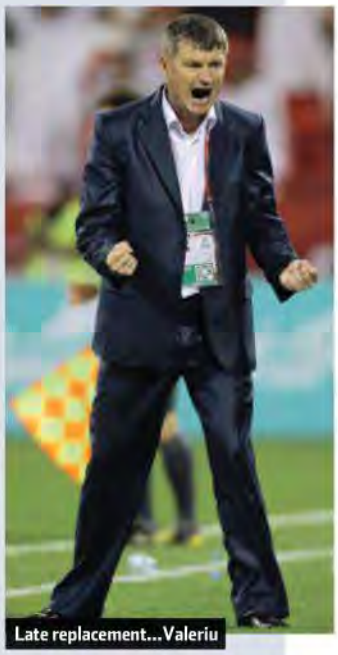
Former South Africa captain NEIL TOVEY was sacked as coach of struggling Premiership club Mpumalanga Black Aces following a 2-0 home defeat by Kaizer Chiefs.

Ocean Boys left-back EMMANUEL OGOLI, 21, collapsed during his side's Nigerian Premier League game against Niger Tornadoes and died on his way to hospital.

Tunisia's CS Sfaxien have appointed NABIL KOUKI as their coach for the remainder of the season.

Former Angola and Zambia coach HERVE RENARD has taken charge of Egyptian club Al Masri until the end of the season. The Frenchman guided Zambia to the quarter-finals of last year's African Nations Cup.

Senegal striker DIEYLANI FALL, who helped Jaraaf de Dakar to win the domestic league title in 2010, signed a four-and-half-year contract with Auxerre of France.


Late replacement...Valeriu

ASIA

Syria sacked coach RATOMIR DUJKOVIC ahead of the Asian Cup after the former China Olympic and Ghana boss failed to return from vacation at the agreed time. He was replaced by TITA VALERIU, who led Syrian side Al Ittihad to the 2010 AFC Cup title.

Saudi Arabian clubs Al Nassr and Al Shabab sacked coaches WALTER ZENGA of Italy and JORGE FOSSATI of Uruguay respectively. Zenga has since joined Al Nasr of the UAE.

SHANE SMELTZ, last season's top scorer in the A-League, is back at Gold Coast United after being released by Turkish club Genclerbirligi.

CONCACAF

The Caribbean Football Union announced that JACK WARNER, the Trinidadian who is also CONCACAF president, and a FIFA vice-president, will run unopposed for an eighth-consecutive term as president of the region's governing body.

End of year AWARDS

Armenia's finest...Mkrtchyan

EUROPE

ARMENIA
Player of the year: Karlen Mkrtchyan (Pyunik)
Coach of the year: Vardan Minasyan (Pyunik and Armenia)

AZERBAIJAN
Player of the year: Rashad F Sadygov (Eskisehirspor, Tur)

BELARUS
Player of the year: Yuri Zhevnov (Zenit, Rus)

BOSNIA & HERZEGOVINA
Player of the year: Edin Dzeko (Wolfsburg, now Manchester City, Eng)
Coach of the year: Vahid Halilhodzic (Dinamo Zagreb, Cro)

BULGARIA
Player of the year: Dimitar Berbatov (Manchester United, Eng)

FINLAND
Player of the year: Sami Hyypia (Bayer Leverkusen, Ger)
Under-21 player of the year: Lukas Hradecky (Esbjerg, Den)
Domestic player of the year: Medo (HJK, now Partizan Belgrade, Ser)
Domestic young player of the year: Roope Riski (TPS Turku)

Bulgaria's best...Berbatov

Zenit clean sweep...Kerzhakov

GREECE
Player of the year: Vassilis Torosidis (Olympiakos)
Foreign player of the year: Djibril Cisse (Panathinaikos)
Young player of the year: Sotiris Ninis (Panathinaikos)
Coach of the year: Fernando Santos (PAOK, now Greece)

LATVIA
Player of the year: Kaspars Gorkss (Queens Park Rangers, Eng)
Young player of the year: Arturs Zjuzins (Ventspils)
Coach of the year: Aleksandrs Starkovs (Skonto)

LITHUANIA
Player of the year: Darvydas Sernas (Widzew Lodz, Pol)
Domestic player of the year: Dominykas Galkevicius (Ekranas)
Coach of the year: Igoris Pankratjevas (Zalgiris)
Young player of the year: Tadas Eliosius (Kruoja)

MACEDONIA
Player of the year: Goran Pandev (Internazionale, Ita)
Domestic player of the year: Martin Bogatinov (Rabotnicki)
Young player of the year: Stefan Ristovski (Parma, Ita)

MONTENEGRO
Player of the year: Mirko Vucinic (Roma, Ita)
Domestic player of the year: Ivan Vukovic (Buducnost Podgorica)
Coach of the year: Nebojsa Vignjevic (Rudar Pljevlja)

RUSSIA
Player of the year: Aleksandr Kerzhakov (Zenit)
Coach of the year: Luciano Spalletti (Zenit)
Foreign player of the year: Danny (Zenit)
Team of the year: Zenit

SERBIA
Player of the year: Dejan Stankovic (Internazionale, Ita)
Coach of the year: Milovan Rajevac (ex-Ghana, now Al Ahli, Sau)

UKRAINE
Player of the year: Andriy Pyatov (Shakhtar Donetsk)

AFRICA

CAF
Player of the year: Samuel Eto'o (Internazionale, Ita and Cameroon)
Coach of the year: Milovan Rajevac (ex-Ghana, now Al Ahli, Sau)

Ghana glory...Rajevac

ALGERIA
Player of the year: Madjid Bougherra (Rangers, Sco)
Domestic player of the year: Abdelmounene Djabou (Entente Setif)
Promising star of the year: Ryad Boudebouz (Sochaux, Fra)

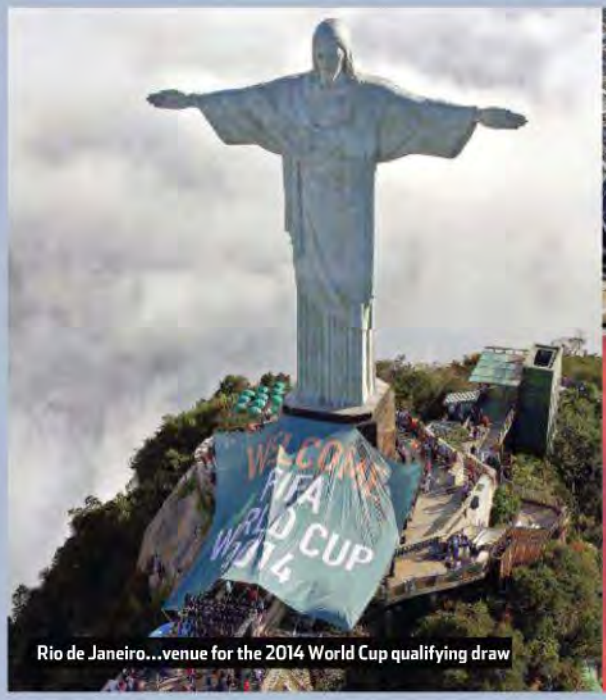
SENEGAL
Player of the year: Mamadou Niang (Fenerbahce, Tur)
Domestic player of the year: Dieylani Fall (Jaraaf, now Auxerre, Fra)

ASIA

UZBEKISTAN
Player of the year: Server Djeparov (Seoul, SKo)
Coach of the year: Aleksey Evstafeev (Uzbekistan Under-16s)

Uzbek crown...Djeparov

2011 Key Dates



Rio de Janeiro...venue for the 2014 World Cup qualifying draw

Champions League Final...Wembley

Qatar prize...the Asian Cup

Germany...hosting the Women's World Cup

Europea League Final...Dublin

JANUARY 7 TO 29
Asian Cup, Qatar

JANUARY 16 TO FEBRUARY 12
South American Under-20 championship, Peru

FEBRUARY 9
Libertadores Cup group phase starts

FEBRUARY 9
Fixed date for friendly international matches

FEBRUARY 15, 16, 22, 23
Champions League round of 16, first leg

FEBRUARY 15, 16, 17
Europa League round of 32, first leg

FEBRUARY 22, 23, 24
Europa League round of 32, second leg

MARCH 3
International FA Board meeting, Cardiff

MARCH 8, 9, 15, 16
Champions League round of 16, second leg

MARCH 10
Europa League round of 16, first leg

MARCH 17
Europa League round of 16, second leg

MARCH 25 TO 29
Fixed dates for competitive international matches

APRIL 5, 6
Champions League quarter-finals, first leg

APRIL 7
Europa League quarter-finals, first leg

APRIL 12, 13
Champions League quarter-finals, second leg

APRIL 14
Europa League quarter-finals, second leg

APRIL 26
Libertadores Cup 2nd round starts

APRIL 26, 27
Champions League semi-finals, first leg

APRIL 28
Europa League semi-finals, first leg

MAY 3, 4
Champions League semi-finals, second leg

MAY 5
Europa League semi-finals, second leg

MAY 10
Libertadores Cup quarter-finals start

MAY 18
Europa League Final, Dublin

MAY 24
Libertadores Cup semi-finals start

MAY 28
Champions League Final, Wembley

MAY 31 TO JUNE 2
FIFA Congress, Zurich

JUNE 3 TO 7
Fixed dates for competitive international matches

JUNE 11 TO 25
European Under-21 championship, Denmark

JUNE 15
Libertadores Cup Final, first leg

JUNE 26 TO JULY 17
Women's World Cup, Germany

JUNE 18 TO JULY 10
World Under-17 championship, Mexico

JUNE 22
Libertadores Cup Final, second leg

JULY 1 TO JULY 24
Copa America, Argentina

JULY 30
2014 World Cup qualifying draw, Rio de Janeiro

JULY 30 TO AUGUST 20
World Under-20 championship, Colombia

AUGUST 10
Fixed date for friendly international matches

SEPTEMBER 2 TO 6
Fixed dates for competitive international matches

OCTOBER 7 TO 11
Fixed dates for competitive international matches

NOVEMBER 11 TO 15
Fixed dates for competitive international matches

DECEMBER 8 TO 18
Club World Cup, Japan

On their way...Bukharov (centre) makes his mark in Greece for Zenit

390 goals in this season's 144 Europa League group games, at an average of 2.7 per match

GERMANY

Labbadia's great start

Stuttgart coach Bruno Labbadia made an impressive start in his new job with his side beating Odense 5-1 in the Europa League in his first game in charge, with goals from Timo Gebhart, Christian Gentner, Pavel Pogrebniak, Ciprian Marica and an own goal from Daniel Hogh.

Peter Utaka replied for the Danish club.

PORTUGAL

Falcao misses chance

Porto striker Falcao failed to take his opportunity to score in his sixth successive Europa League game when he missed a penalty in the 3-1 victory at home to CSKA Sofia.

Nicolas Otamendi, Ruben Micael and James Rodriguez scored for the hosts, though Spas Delev briefly levelled the scores for the Bulgarians.

RESULTS

WORLD

CLUB WORLD CUP

In Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates

Preliminary round

Dec 8
Al Wahda (UAE) 3 (Hugo 40, Fernando Baiano 44, Jumaa 71)
Hekari United (PNG) 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 23,895. **Ref:** Bennett (SAf)
Al Wahda: Adel Al Hosani - Magrao, Fernando Baiano (Diarra 72), Matar (Bazuhair 83), Masoud (Jumaa 63), Saeed, Ali, Al Hammadi, E Ahmed, Al Kamali, Hugo.
Hekari: Tamanisau - Omokirio, Iniga (Hans 79), Vakatalesau, Muta, Bolatoga, Jack, Upaiga, Tiwa, Singh, Fa arodo.

Quarter-finals

Dec 10
TP Mazembe (DRC) 1 (Bedi 21)
Pachuca (Mex) 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 17,960. **Ref:** Nishimura (Jap)
TP Mazembe: Kidiaba - Kimwaki, Kasusula, Nkulukuta, Singuluma, Kabangu (Tshani 85), Bedi, Kaluyituka (Kanda 90+1), Sunzu, Mihayo, Ekanga (Kasongo 46). *Sent off: Sunzu 81min.*
Pachuca: Calero - Lopez, Luna (Gomez 74), Torres (Brambila 73), Cvitanich, Manso, Aguilar, Martinez, Arizala, Munoz, Pena (Benitez 58).

Dec 11
Al Wahda 1 (Fernando Baiano 27)
Seongnam Ilhwa Chunma (SKo) 4 (Molina 4, Ognenovski 30, Choi Sung-kuk 71, Cho Dong-geon 81)
HT: 1-2. **Att:** 30,625. **Ref:** Carrillo (Per)
Al Wahda: Adel Al Hosani - Magrao (Jalal 90), Fernando Baiano, Matar, Masoud (Al Kathiri 64), Saeed, Ali (Al Shehhi 54), Al Hammadi, E Ahmed, Al Kamali, Hugo.
Seongnam: Jung Sung-ryong - Ko Jae-sung, Ognenovski, Cho Byung-kuk, Cheon Kwang-jin (Jo Jae-cheol 46), Choi Sung-kuk, Cho Dong-geon, Radoncic (Song Ho-young 69), Molina (Kim Jin-ryong 84), Kim Sung-hwan, Hong Chul.

Byes to semi-finals:
Internacional (Bra), Internazionale (Ita)

Semi-finals

Dec 14
TP Mazembe 2 (Kabangu 53, Kaluyituka 85)
Internacional 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 22,131. **Ref:** Kuipers (Hol)
TP Mazembe: Kidiaba - Kimwaki, Kasusula, Nkulukuta, Singuluma, Kabangu (Kanda 85), Bedi, Kaluyituka, Mihayo, Ekanga, Kasongo.
Internacional: Renan - Bolivar, Indio, Nei, Guinazu, Kleber, Tinga (Giuliano 63), Alecsandro (Leandro Damiao 63), D Alessandro, Rafael Sobis (Oscar 76), Wilson Matias.

Dec 15
Seongnam Ilhwa Chunma 0
Internazionale 3 (Stankovic 3, Zanetti 32, Milito 73)
HT: 0-2. **Att:** 35,995. **Ref:** Moreno (Pan)
Seongnam: Jung Sung-ryong - Ko Jae-sung, Ognenovski, Cho Byung-kuk, Choi Sung-kuk (Song Ho-young 67), Cho Dong-geon, Radoncic (Kim Jin-ryong 87), Molina, Kim Sung-hwan, Hong Chul, Jo Jae-cheol (Cheon Kwang-jin 68).
Internazionale: Julio Cesar - Cordoba, Zanetti, Stankovic, Lucio, Eto o, Sneijder (Thiago Motta 4), Cambiasso, Milito (Muntari 77), Chivu (Santon 79), Pandev.

Fifth-place play-off

Dec 15
Pachuca 2 (Cvitanich 82, 89)
Al Wahda 2 (Matar 44, Al Hammadi 77)
No extra-time. **HT:** 0-1. **Att:** 10,908.
Ref: Bennett (SAf)
Pachuca 4-2 on pens
Pachuca: Calero - Lopez, Gomez (Benitez 62), Luna, Montes, Torres, Manso, Aguilar (Rojas 62), Martinez (Cvitanich 77), Arizala, Munoz.
Al Wahda: Adel Al Hosani - Y Al Hosani, Matar (O Ahmed 75), Al Kathiri (Diarra 46), Masoud (Al Shehhi 64), Saeed, Jumaa, Al Hammadi, E Ahmed, Al Kamali, Hugo. *Sent off: Al Kamali 72min.*

Third-place play-off

Dec 18
Internacional 4 (Tinga 15, Alecsandro 27, 71, D Alessandro 52)
Seongnam Ilhwa Chunma 2 (Molina 84, 90+3)
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 16,563. **Ref:** Hester (NZ)
Internacional: Renan (Abbondanzieri 74) - Bolivar, Indio, Nei, Guinazu, Kleber, Tinga, Alecsandro, D Alessandro, Rafael Sobis (Giuliano 62), Wilson Matias (Andrezinho 81).
Seongnam: Jung Sung-ryong - Ko Jae-sung, Yun Young-sun, Choi Sung-kuk, Cho Dong-geon, Molina, Song Ho-young (Radoncic 28; Kim Jin-ryong 43; Cheon Kwang-jin 78), Kim Sung-hwan, Hong Chul, Jang Suk-won, Jo Jae-cheol. *Sent off: Jang Suk-won 34min.*

Final

Dec 18
TP Mazembe 0
Internazionale 3 (Pandev 13, Eto o 17, Biabiany 85)
HT: 0-2. **Att:** 42,174. **Ref:** Nishimura (Jap)
TP Mazembe: Kidiaba - Kimwaki, Kasusula, Nkulukuta, Singuluma, Kabangu, Bedi, Kaluyituka (Ndonga 90), Mihayo, Ekanga, Kasongo (Kanda 46).
Internazionale: Julio Cesar - Cordoba, Zanetti, Lucio, Thiago Motta (Mariga 87), Eto o, Maicon, Cambiasso, Milito (Biabiany 70), Chivu (Stankovic 54), Pandev.

PREVIOUS WINNERS*

2000	Corinthians (Bra)
2005	Sao Paulo (Bra)
2006	Internacional (Bra)
2007	Milan (Ita)
2008	Manchester United (Eng)
2009	Barcelona (Spa)

**The annual Intercontinental/Toyota Cup (contested by just the champion clubs of Europe and South America) was held from 1960 to 2004*

EUROPE

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Group A

Dec 7
Twente Enschede (Hol) 3 (Landzaat pen 22, Rosales 56, Chadli 64)
Tottenham Hotspur (Eng) 3 (Wisgerhof og 12, Defoe 47, 59)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 24,000. **Ref:** Velasco Carballo (Spa)
Twente: Boschker - Rosales, Douglas, Wisgerhof, Tiendalli, Brama, Landzaat, Janssen, De Jong, Janko (Vujicevic 72), Chadli.
Tottenham: Gomes - Corluka, Gallas, Bassong, Assou-Ekotto, Kranjcar (Crouch 86), Jenas (Lennon 34), Palacios, Bale, Defoe, Pavlyuchenko (Keane 72).

Dec 7
Werder Bremen (Ger) 3 (Prodl 38, Arnautovic 49, Pizarro 88)
Internazionale (Ita) 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 30,400. **Ref:** Cakir (Tur)
Werder: Wiese - Schmidt, Mertesacker, Prodl, Pasanen (Silvestre 83), Frings (Bargfrede 78), Fritz, Marin, Hunt, Hugo Almeida (Pizarro 75), Arnautovic.
Inter: Orlandoni - Zanetti (Natalino 54), Cordoba, Cambiasso, Biraghi, Thiago Motta (Mariga 76), Obiora, Santon (Biabiany 50), Muntari, Pandev, Eto o.

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE GROUP A FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Tottenham	6	3	2	1	18	11	11
Inter	6	3	1	2	12	11	10
Twente	6	1	3	2	9	11	6
Werder	6	1	2	3	6	12	5

Sep 14	Twente v Internazionale 2-2
	Werder v Tottenham 2-2
Sep 29	Internazionale v Werder 4-0
	Tottenham v Twente 4-1
Oct 20	Internazionale v Tottenham 4-3
	Twente v Werder 1-1
Nov 2	Tottenham v Internazionale 3-1
	Werder v Twente 0-2
Nov 24	Internazionale v Twente 1-0
	Tottenham v Werder 3-0
Dec 7	Twente v Tottenham 3-3
	Werder v Internazionale 3-0

Group B

Dec 7
Benfica (Por) 1 (Luisao 87)
Schalke (Ger) 2 (Jurado 19, Howedes 81)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 23,348. **Ref:** Webb (Eng)
Benfica: Roberto - Pereira (Gaitan 46), Luisao, David Luiz, Fabio Coentrao, Javi Garcia, Ruben Amorim, Cesar Peixoto (Almar 46), Carlos Martins (Salvio 79), Cardozo, Saviola.
Schalke: Neuer - Uchida, Howedes, Metzelder, Schmitz, Kluge (Matip 82), Papadopoulos, Jurado (Jendrisek 88), Rakitic, Raul, Huntelaar (Edu 85).

Dec 7
Lyon (Fra) 2 (Lopez 62, Lacazette 88)
Hapoel Tel Aviv (Isr) 2 (Sahar 63, Zahavi 69)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 32,245. **Ref:** Moen (Nor)
Lyon: Lloris - Reveillere, Cris, Diakhate, Cissokho (Pied 78), Makoun, Gonalons, Pjanic (Lacazette 68), Briand, Gomis (Michel Bastos 59), Lopez.
Hapoel: Enyeama - Bondarv, Fransman, Douglas, Shish, Vermouth, Abutbul (Badier 80), Yadin, Zahavi, Tamuz (Toama 62), Shechter (Sahar 25).

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE GROUP B FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Schalke	6	4	1	1	10	3	13
Lyon	6	3	1	2	11	10	10
Benfica	6	2	0	4	7	12	6
Hapoel Tel Aviv	6	1	2	3	7	10	5

Sep 14	Benfica v Hapoel Tel Aviv 2-0
	Lyon v Schalke 1-0
Sep 29	Hapoel Tel Aviv v Lyon 1-3
	Schalke v Benfica 2-0
Oct 20	Lyon v Benfica 2-0
	Schalke v Hapoel Tel Aviv 3-1
Nov 2	Benfica v Lyon 4-3
	Hapoel Tel Aviv v Schalke 0-0
Nov 24	Hapoel Tel Aviv v Benfica 3-0
	Schalke v Lyon 3-0
Dec 7	Benfica v Schalke 1-2
	Lyon v Hapoel Tel Aviv 2-2

Group C

Dec 7
Bursaspor (Tur) 1 (Sercan 79)
Rangers (Sco) 1 (Miller 19)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 9,673. **Ref:** Chapron (Fra)
Bursaspor: Yavuz - Mustafa, Serdar (Omer 46), Stepanov, Vederson, Huseyin (Batalla 46), Bekir, Sercan, Insua, Ozan, Nunez (Turgay 62).
Rangers: McGregor - Cole (McMillan 83), Weir, Bougherra, Foster, Whittaker, Davis, McCulloch, Hutton, S Naismith (Weiss 71), Miller (Beattie 63).

Dec 7
Manchester United (Eng) 1 (Anderson 62)
Valencia (Spa) 1 (Pablo 32)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 74,513. **Ref:** Proenca (Por)
Man United: Amos - Rafael, Ferdinand (Smalling 50), Vidic, Fabio, Nani (Giggs 81), Carrick, Anderson (Fletcher 90), Park, Berbatov, Rooney.
Valencia: Guaita - Miguel, Ricardo Costa, Dealbert, Mathieu, Pablo (Feghouli 81), Banega, Albelda, Jordi Alba (Mata 68), Dominguez (Isco 54), Aduriz.

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE GROUP C FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Man United	6	4	2	0	7	1	14
Valencia	6	3	2	1	15	4	11
Rangers	6	1	3	2	3	6	6
Bursaspor	6	0	1	5	2	16	1

Sep 14	Bursaspor v Valencia 0-4
	Man United v Rangers 0-0
Sep 29	Rangers v Bursaspor 1-0
	Valencia v Man United 0-1
Oct 20	Man United v Bursaspor 1-0
	Rangers v Valencia 1-1
Nov 2	Bursaspor v Man United 0-3
	Valencia v Rangers 3-0
Nov 24	Rangers v Man United 0-1
	Valencia v Bursaspor 6-1
Dec 7	Bursaspor v Rangers 1-1
	Man United v Valencia 1-1

Paying the penalty...Falcao

RUSSIA

Six out of six

Zenit were the only team to reach the knockout phase of the Europa League with a 100 per cent record. They made it six wins out of six with a 3-0 victory against AEK in Athens.

The home side's Ismael Blanco missed a penalty before Alexander Bukharov, Alessandro Rosina and Igor Denisov scored for the visitors.

SPAIN

Holders dismissed

Europa League holders Atletico Madrid were knocked out of this season's competition in the group stage when they drew 1-1 with Bayer Leverkusen.

Fran Merida levelled after Patrick Helmes had put the hosts ahead, but Aris' 2-0 victory over Rosenborg saw the Greek side progress at Atletico's expense.

Damp squib...Atletico (left)

€75,000 Spartak Moscow's fine for hooliganism at MSK Zilina

Group D

Dec 7

Barcelona (Spa) 2 (Fontas 51, Victor Vazquez 83)
Rubin Kazan (Rus) 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 50,436. **Ref:** Eriksson (Swe)
Barcelona: Pinto - Pique, Busquets, Fontas, Dos Santos (Messi 63), Alcantara, Mascherano, Maxwell, Jeffren (Victor Vazquez 13), Bojan (Bartra 35), Adriano.
Rubin: Ryzhikov - Ansaldi, Cesar Navas, Kuzmin, Bocchetti, Noboa, Kaleshin, Murawski, Ryazantsev (Kasaev 62), Gokdeniz (Bystrov 75), Martins (Medvedev 66).

Dec 7

Copenhagen (Den) 3 (Vingaard 26, Gronkjaer pen 50, Cisse og 73)
Panathinaikos (Gre) 1 (Kante 90+2)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 36,797. **Ref:** Meyer (Ger)
Copenhagen: Wiland - Pospech, Jorgensen, Antonsson (Ottesen 77), Wendt, Bolanos, Kvist, Claudemir, Vingaard, N Doye (Santin 80), Gronkjaer (Zohore 87).
Panathinaikos: Tzorvas - Vyntra, Boumsong, Kante, Spyropoulos, Marinos, Simao, Gilberto Silva (Ninis 46), Christodoulopoulos (Leto 46), Luis Garcia (Petropoulos 74), Cisse.

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE GROUP D FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Barcelona	6	4	2	0	14	3	14
Copenhagen	6	3	1	2	7	5	10
Rubin Kazan	6	1	3	2	2	4	6
Panathinaikos	6	0	2	4	2	13	2

Sep 14	Barcelona v Panathinaikos	5-1
	Copenhagen v Rubin	1-0
Sep 29	Panathinaikos v Copenhagen	0-2
	Rubin v Barcelona	1-1
Oct 20	Barcelona v Copenhagen	2-0
	Panathinaikos v Rubin	0-0
Nov 2	Copenhagen v Barcelona	1-1
	Rubin v Panathinaikos	0-0
Nov 24	Panathinaikos v Barcelona	0-3
	Rubin v Copenhagen	1-0
Dec 7	Barcelona v Rubin	2-0
	Copenhagen v Panathinaikos	3-1

Group E

Dec 8

Bayern Munich (Ger) 3 (Ribery 35, 49, Tymoshchuk 37)
Basle (Swi) 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 64,000. **Ref:** Hansson (Swe)
Bayern: Kraft - Lahm, Tymoshchuk, Breno, Contento, Van Bommel, Kroos (Altintop 68), Muller, Schweinsteiger, Ribery, Gomez.
Basle: Costanzo - Inkoom, Abraham, Ferati, Safari, Shaqiri (Tembo 76), Cabral (Almerares 55), Yapi, Stocker, Frei, Streller (G Xhaka 46).

Dec 8

CFR Cluj (Rom) 1 (Traore 88)
Roma (Ita) 1 (Borriello 21)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 12,800. **Ref:** Collum (Sco)
CFR: Stancioiu - Panin, Rada, Cadu, Edimar (Bjelanovic 63), Kone, Dica (Leo Veloso 46), Kivuvu, Culio, De Zerbi (Bastos 78), Traore.
Roma: Lobont - Cassetti (Cicinho 64), Mexes, N Burdisso, Castellini, Simplicio, De Rossi, Brighi, Totti, Menez (Greco 46), Borriello.

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE GROUP E FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Bayern	6	5	0	1	16	6	15
Roma	6	3	1	2	10	11	10
Basle	6	2	0	4	8	11	6
CFR Cluj	6	1	1	4	6	12	4

Sep 15	Bayern Munich v Roma	2-0
	CFR Cluj v Basle	2-1
Sep 28	Basle v Bayern Munich	1-2
	Roma v CFR Cluj	2-1
Oct 19	Bayern Munich v CFR Cluj	3-2
	Roma v Basle	1-3
Nov 3	Basle v Roma	2-3
	CFR Cluj v Bayern Munich	0-4
Nov 23	Basle v CFR Cluj	1-0
	Roma v Bayern Munich	3-2
Dec 8	Bayern Munich v Basle	3-0
	CFR Cluj v Roma	1-1

Group F

Dec 8

Marseille (Fra) 1 (Brandao 81)
Chelsea (Eng) 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 50,604. **Ref:** Bezborodov (Rus)
Marseille: Mandanda - Kabore, Diawara, Heinze, Taiwo, N Diaye (J Ayew 86), Abriel (A Ayew 63), Cheyrou, Valbuena (Gonzalez 63), Remy, Brandao.
Chelsea: Cech - Bosingwa (Van Aanholt 79), Ivanovic, Terry (Bruma 72), Paulo Ferreira, McEachran, Essien, Ramires, Kalou, Malouda, Drogba (Sturridge 62).

Dec 8

Zilina (Slk) 1 (Majtan 48)
Spartak Moscow (Rus) 2 (Alex 54, Ibson 61)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 7,208. **Ref:** Blom (Hol)
Zilina: Dubravka - Angelovic, Piacek, Pecalka, Gergel, Poliacek (Rilke 46), Guldan, Jez (Ceesay 69), Bello, Majtan (Mraz 85), Oravec.
Spartak: Dykan - Makeev (Ozobic 55), Suchy, Stranzl, K Kombarov (Ivanov 83), Sheshukov, Ibson, Alex, D Kombarov, McGeady, Kozlov (Drincic 46).
Sent off: Ibson 77min.

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE GROUP F FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Chelsea	6	5	0	1	14	4	15
Marseille	6	4	0	2	12	3	12
Spartak M cow	6	3	0	3	7	10	9
Zilina	6	0	0	6	3	19	0

Sep 15	Marseille v Spartak Moscow	0-1
	Zilina v Chelsea	1-4
Sep 28	Chelsea v Marseille	2-0
	Spartak Moscow v Zilina	3-0
Oct 19	Marseille v Zilina	1-0
	Spartak Moscow v Chelsea	0-2
Nov 3	Chelsea v Spartak Moscow	4-1
	Zilina v Marseille	0-7
Nov 23	Chelsea v Zilina	2-1
	Spartak Moscow v Marseille	0-3
Dec 8	Marseille v Chelsea	1-0
	Zilina v Spartak Moscow	1-2

ESM Team of the Month

European Sports Magazines — DECEMBER 2010

HOW IT WORKS

Every month, journalists from each member of the European Sports Magazines group vote for their first XI from Europe's top leagues. The players with the most votes make the overall team. For details of how ESM members voted this month, visit: **worldsoccer.com/esm11**

On a roll...Alar

AUSTRIA

Alar scores again

Deni Alar scored for the sixth game running for strugglers Kapfenberger as his side drew 2-2 with bottom-of-the-league LASK in the final game before the winter break.

Kapfenberger's second goal was scored by the coach's son, Michi Gregoritsch, who, at the age of 15 years and 361 days, became the Austrian Bundesliga's youngest-ever scorer last April.

Former Bahrain Olympic team coach Georg Zellhofer, who replaced Helmut Kraft in charge at LASK, has picked up just two points from his first five games.

Meanwhile, title-holders Salzburg – who trail leaders Ried by four points at the break – have boosted their squad in advance of the February restart with the signing of Brazilian central defender Douglas da Silva from Hapoel Tel-Aviv. The 26-year-old featured in all six of the Isreali club's Champions League group games this season.

BELGIUM

Holders march on

Defending champions Anderlecht are six points clear at the top of the table,

Group G

Dec 8

Milan (Ita) 0

Ajax (Hol) 2 (De Zeeuw 57, Alderweireld 66)

HT: 0-0. **Att:** 72,960. **Ref:** Larsen (Den)

Milan: Amelia - Bonera, Yepes, Thiago Silva, Antonini, Flamini (Boateng 26), Pirlo, Ambrosini (Ibrahimovic 63), Seedorf, Robinho (Merkel 76), Ronaldinho.

Ajax: Stekelenburg - Van der Wiel, Alderweireld, Vertonghen, Emanuelson, Enoh, De Jong (El Hamdaoui 84), De Zeeuw (Lindgren 82), Suarez (Tainio 90+2), Eriksen, Sulejmani.

Dec 8

Real Madrid (Spa) 4 (Benzema 12, 72, 88, Cristiano Ronaldo 49)

Auxerre (Fra) 0

HT: 1-0. **Att:** 54,917. **Ref:** Gumienny (Blg)

Real Madrid: Dudek (Adan 45+4) - Arbeloa, Albiol, Ricardo Carvalho, Marcelo (Garay 76), Granero, L Diarra, M Diarra, Leon, Benzema, Cristiano Ronaldo (Sarabia 72).

Auxerre: Sorin - Dudka, Coulibaly, Mignot, Grichting, Pedretti (Sammaritano 62), Chafni, Oliech, Traore, Birsa (Langil 89), Contout (Quercia 72).

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE GROUP G FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Real Madrid	6	5	1	0	15	2	16
Milan	6	2	2	2	7	7	8
Ajax	6	2	1	3	6	10	7
Auxerre	6	1	0	5	3	12	3

Sep 15	Milan v Auxerre	2-0
	Real Madrid v Ajax	2-0
Sep 28	Ajax v Milan	1-1
	Auxerre v Real Madrid	0-1
Oct 19	Ajax v Auxerre	2-1
	Real Madrid v Milan	2-0
Nov 3	Auxerre v Ajax	2-1
	Milan v Real Madrid	2-2
Nov 23	Ajax v Real Madrid	0-4
	Auxerre v Milan	0-2
Dec 8	Milan v Ajax	0-2
	Real Madrid v Auxerre	4-0

Group H

Dec 8

Arsenal (Eng) 3 (Van Persie pen 30, Walcott 73, Nasri 77)

Partizan Belgrade (Ser) 1 (Cleo 52)

HT: 1-0. **Att:** 58,845. **Ref:** Tagliavento (Ita)

Arsenal: Fabianski - Sagna, Squillaci, Koscielny, Gibbs (Eboue 24), Nasri, Song, Denilson, Arshavin (Walcott 67), Van Persie, Chamakh (Bendtner 76). *Sent off: Sagna 85min.*

Partizan: Stojkovic - Savic, Jovanovic, Krstajic, Lazevski, Petrovic, Medo, Babovic (Davidov 81), Moreira (Brasanac 90+1), S Ilic, Cleo.

Dec 8

Shakhtar Donetsk (Ukr) 2 (Rat 78, Luiz Adriano 83)

Braga (Por) 0

HT: 0-0. **Att:** 47,627. **Ref:** Brych (Ger)

Shakhtar: Pyatov - Srna, Chygrynskyi, Rakytskyi, Rat, Hai (Kobin 84), Stepanenko, Douglas Costa (Alex Teixeira 62), Jadson (Mkhitaryan 73), Willian, Luiz Adriano.

Braga: Artur Moraes - Miguel Garcia, Anibal, Rodriguez, Silvio, Vandinho, Leandro Salino (Helder Barbosa 81), Alan (Lima 69), Aguiar (Hugo Viana 72), Paulo Cesar, Matheus.

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE GROUP H FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Shakhtar	6	5	0	1	12	6	15
Arsenal	6	4	0	2	18	7	12
Braga	6	3	0	3	5	11	9
Partizan	6	0	0	6	2	13	0

Sep 15	Arsenal v Braga	6-0
	Shakhtar v Partizan	1-0
Sep 28	Braga v Shakhtar	0-3
	Partizan v Arsenal	1-3
Oct 19	Arsenal v Shakhtar	5-1
	Braga v Partizan	2-0
Nov 3	Partizan v Braga	0-1
	Shakhtar v Arsenal	2-1
Nov 23	Braga v Arsenal	2-0
	Partizan v Shakhtar	0-3
Dec 8	Arsenal v Partizan	3-1
	Shakhtar v Braga	2-0

Top two in each group qualified for 1st knockout round; the third-placed teams entered Europa League at 1st knockout round stage

1st knockout round draw

Arsenal v Barcelona (Feb 16 & Mar 8)
Copenhagen v Chelsea (Feb 22 & Mar 16)
Internazionale v Bayern Munich (Feb 23 & Mar 15)
Lyon v Real Madrid (Feb 22 & Mar 16)
Marseille v Manchester United (Feb 23 & Mar 15)
Milan v Tottenham Hotspur (Feb 15 & Mar 9)
Roma v Shakhtar Donetsk (Feb 16 & Mar 8)
Valencia v Schalke (Feb 15 & Mar 9)

EUROPA LEAGUE

Group A

Dec 16: Juventus (Ita) 1 Manchester City (Eng) 1; Salzburg (Aut) 0 Lech Poznan (Pol) 1.

EUROPA LEAGUE GROUP A FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Man City	6	3	2	1	11	6	11
Lech Poznan	6	3	2	1	11	8	11
Juventus	6	0	6	0	7	7	6
Salzburg	6	0	2	4	1	9	2

Group B

Dec 16: Aris Salonika (Gre) 2 Rosenborg (Nor) 0; Bayer Leverkusen (Ger) 1 Atletico Madrid (Spa) 1.

EUROPA LEAGUE GROUP B FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
B Leverkusen	6	3	3	0	8	2	12
Aris	6	3	1	2	7	5	10
At Madrid	6	2	2	2	9	7	8
Rosenborg	6	1	0	5	3	13	3

Group C

Dec 16: Levski Sofia (Bul) 1 Sporting Lisbon (Por) 0; Lille (Fra) 3 Gent (Blg) 0.

EUROPA LEAGUE GROUP C FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sporting	6	4	0	2	14	6	12
Lille	6	2	2	2	8	6	8
Gent	6	2	1	3	8	13	7
Levski Sofia	6	2	1	3	6	11	7

Group D

Dec 15: Club Brugge (Blg) 1 Villarreal (Spa) 2; Dinamo Zagreb (Cro) 0 PAOK Salonika (Gre) 1.

EUROPA LEAGUE GROUP D FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Villarreal	6	4	0	2	8	5	12
PAOK	6	3	2	1	5	3	11
Dinamo Zagreb	6	2	1	3	4	5	7
Club Brugge	6	0	3	3	4	8	3

Group E

Dec 15: AZ Alkmaar (Hol) 3 BATE Borisov (Bls) 0; Dynamo Kyiv (Ukr) 0 Sheriff (Mol) 0.

EUROPA LEAGUE GROUP E FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Dynamo Kyiv	6	3	2	1	10	6	11
BATE Borisov	6	3	1	2	11	11	10
AZ Alkmaar	6	2	1	3	8	10	7
Sheriff	6	1	2	3	5	7	5

Group F

Dec 15: Lausanne (Swi) 0 Palermo (Ita) 1; Sparta Prague (Cze) 1 CSKA Moscow (Rus) 1.

EUROPA LEAGUE GROUP F FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
CSKA Moscow	6	5	1	0	18	3	16
Sparta Prague	6	2	3	1	12	12	9
Palermo	6	2	1	3	7	11	7
Lausanne	6	0	1	5	5	16	1

Group G

Dec 16: AEK Athens (Gre) 0 Zenit St Petersburg (Rus) 3; Anderlecht (Blg) 2 Hajduk Split (Cro) 0.

EUROPA LEAGUE GROUP G FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Zenit	6	6	0	0	18	6	18
Anderlecht	6	2	1	3	8	8	7
AEK	6	2	1	3	9	13	7
Hajduk	6	1	0	5	5	13	3

Group H

Dec 16: Getafe (Spa) 1 Young Boys (Swi) 0; Stuttgart (Ger) 5 OB Odense (Den) 1.

EUROPA LEAGUE GROUP H FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Stuttgart	6	5	0	1	16	6	15
Young Boys	6	3	0	3	10	10	9
Getafe	6	2	1	3	4	8	7
OB Odense	6	1	1	4	8	14	4

Group I

Dec 16: Debrecen (Hun) 2 Sampdoria (Ita) 0; PSV Eindhoven (Hol) 0 Metalist Kharkiv (Ukr) 0.

EUROPA LEAGUE GROUP I FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
PSV	6	4	2	0	10	3	14
Metalist	6	3	2	1	9	4	11
Sampdoria	6	1	2	3	4	7	5
Debrecen	6	1	0	5	4	13	3

Group J

Dec 15: Karpaty Lviv (Ukr) 1 Paris Saint-Germain (Fra) 1; Sevilla (Spa) 2 Borussia Dortmund (Ger) 2.

EUROPA LEAGUE GROUP J FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
PSG	6	3	3	0	9	4	12
Sevilla	6	3	1	2	10	7	10
B Dortmund	6	2	3	1	10	7	9
Karpaty	6	0	1	5	4	15	1

Group K

Dec 15: Liverpool (Eng) 0 Utrecht (Hol) 0; Napoli (Ita) 1 Steaua Bucharest (Rom) 0.

EUROPA LEAGUE GROUP K FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Liverpool	6	2	4	0	8	3	10
Napoli	6	1	4	1	8	9	7
Steaua	6	1	3	2	9	11	6
Utrecht	6	0	5	1	5	7	5

Group L

Dec 15: Besiktas (Tur) 2 Rapid Wien (Aut) 0; Porto (Por) 3 CSKA Sofia (Bul) 1.

EUROPA LEAGUE GROUP L FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Porto	6	5	1	0	14	4	16
Besiktas	6	4	1	1	9	6	13
Rapid Wien	6	1	0	5	5	12	3
CSKA Sofia	6	1	0	5	4	10	3

Top two in each group qualified for 1st knockout round, in which they are joined by the eight third-placed teams from the Champions League group stage

1st knockout round draw

Anderlecht v Ajax*
Aris Salonika v Manchester City^
Basle* v Spartak Moscow*
BATE Borisov v Paris Saint-Germain
Benfica* v Stuttgart
Besiktas v Dynamo Kyiv
Lech Poznan v Braga*
Lille v PSV Eindhoven
Metalist Kharkiv v Bayer Leverkusen
Napoli v Villarreal
PAOK Salonika v CSKA Moscow>
Rangers* v Sporting Lisbon
Rubin Kazan* v Twente Enschede*
Sevilla v Porto>
Sparta Prague v Liverpool
Young Boys v Zenit St Petersburg

1st legs - February 17 (^February 15);
2nd legs - February 24 (>February 22)
**Third-placed teams in Champions League groups*

AUSTRIA

Dec 11: Mattersburg 1 Austria 2; Kapfenberger 2 LASK 2; Rapid 3 Wacker 3; Ried 1 Wiener Neustadt 0.

Dec 12: Salzburg 2 Sturm Graz 1.

AUSTRIA*	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Ried	19	12	1	6	30	19	37
Sturm	19	10	3	6	37	19	33
Salzburg	19	9	6	4	22	13	33
Austria	19	9	5	5	30	19	32
Rapid	19	8	6	5	31	23	30
W Neustadt	19	8	4	7	25	25	28
Wacker	19	7	5	7	25	22	26
Kapfenberger	19	6	5	8	26	33	23
Mattersburg	19	3	3	13	15	35	12
LASK	19	2	4	13	14	47	10

36-round season (9x4); bottom team will be relegated
**League now on winter break; it resumes on weekend of February 12/13*

Double...Boussoufa

having boosted their goal difference with a 6-0 thrashing of Lierse in their penultimate game of 2010. Roland Juhasz, Romelu Lukaku, Marcin Wasilewski, Mbark Boussoufa (twice) and Pablo Chavarria were the scorers.

BULGARIA

Balakov bows out

Krassimir Balakov, who was a member of the national side that reached the World Cup semi-finals in 1994, stepped down as coach of Chernomorets by mutual consent, despite the side sitting fourth in the league.

Gone...Balakov

CYPRUS

Change at Anorthosis

Former Bulgaria boss Stanimir Stoilov has been put in charge of Anorthosis for the rest of the season following the resignation of Slobodan Krcmarevic following a 3-1 defeat away to APOP.

"After performances like that, the coach has to take the blame," said Krcmarevic who lasted barely a month and left with the club 19 points behind league leaders APOEL.

"I have been appointed by a big club with a 100-year history," said Stoilov. "We will be aiming for a top-four finish and the Cypriot Cup."

BELGIUM

Regular season

Dec 4: Charleroi 0 Cercle Brugge 5 (awarded).
Dec 10: Mechelen 0 Club Brugge 1.
Dec 11: Gent 2 Charleroi 1; Standard 1 St Truiden 0; Genk 5 Eupen 1; Westerlo 1 Germinal Beerschot 1; Cercle Brugge 1 Zulte Waregem 3.
Dec 12: Anderlecht 0 Lokeren 0; Kortrijk 3 Lierse 1.
Dec 17: Kortrijk 2 Standard 1.
Dec 18: St Truiden 0 Mechelen 5 (awarded); Zulte Waregem 2 Westerlo 0; Lierse 1 Genk 1; Eupen 1 Charleroi 0.
Dec 19: Club Brugge 0 Anderlecht 2.
Dec 26: Cercle Brugge 1 Standard 0; Gent 0 Club Brugge 2; Anderlecht 6 Lierse 0.
Dec 29: Kortrijk 0 Anderlecht 2; Club Brugge 5 Charleroi 0; Germinal Beerschot 0 Eupen 0; Lierse 2 Westerlo 1.
Dec 30: Zulte Waregem 2 Gent 2; Lokeren 2 Genk 2.

BELGIUM REGULAR	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Anderlecht	22	15	5	2	48	14	50
Genk	21	13	5	3	53	21	44
Gent	21	12	3	6	41	32	39
Club Brugge	22	11	3	8	45	29	36
Lokeren	19	9	7	3	30	24	34
Standard	21	10	3	8	38	27	33
Cercle Brugge	20	9	5	6	27	25	32
Kortrijk	20	9	3	8	24	22	30
Mechelen	18	8	5	5	27	21	29
Z Waregem	21	6	10	5	32	26	28
Westerlo	21	6	7	8	26	30	25
St Truiden	20	6	2	12	14	40	20
Eupen	20	4	4	12	22	37	16
Germinal B	20	3	7	10	12	28	16
Lierse	21	2	7	12	17	45	13
Charleroi	21	1	4	16	12	47	7

30-round regular season (15x2) top 6 will enter championship play-offs, 7th to 14th will enter Europa League place play-offs, bottom 2 will enter rel/prom play-offs (1 of them will definitely go down)

BULGARIA

BULGARIA*	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Lovech	15	11	4	0	25	8	37
Levski	15	10	2	3	32	15	32
Lok Sofia	15	9	1	5	31	18	28
Chernomorets	15	7	7	1	12	7	28
Lok Plovdiv	15	7	5	3	27	14	26
CSKA	15	7	5	3	22	15	26
Slavia	15	7	2	6	25	20	23
Beroe	15	6	5	4	15	15	23
Cherno More	15	7	1	7	17	21	22
Montana	15	4	4	7	17	21	16
Kaliakra	15	4	4	7	9	19	16
Akademik	15	3	3	9	10	21	12
Minyor	15	3	3	9	18	30	12
Pirin	15	2	5	8	10	21	11
Sliven	15	2	4	9	12	22	10
V-Rakovski	15	2	3	10	12	27	9

30-round season (15x2); bottom 2 will be relegated; 3rd bottom will enter rel/prom play-off

**League now on winter break; it resumes on weekend of February 26/27*

CROATIA

CROATIA*	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Dinamo	18	14	3	1	40	9	45
Hajduk	18	12	4	2	39	15	40
Cibalia	18	9	3	6	24	14	30
Inter	18	8	4	6	17	17	28
Split	18	8	3	7	21	13	27
Karlovac	18	8	2	8	17	16	26
Rijeka	18	7	4	7	22	26	25
Varazdin	18	6	7	5	16	21	25
Slaven	18	6	6	6	18	18	24
Zadar	18	7	2	9	23	24	23
Osijek	18	5	7	6	20	20	22
Zagreb	18	6	3	9	16	21	21
Lokomotiva	18	6	3	9	17	27	21
Sibenik	18	4	6	8	21	25	18
Istra	18	5	3	10	14	27	18
H Dragovoljac	18	1	4	13	11	43	7

30-round season (15x2); bottom 5 will be relegated

**League now on winter break; it resumes on weekend of February 26/27*

CYPRUS

Regular season

Dec 11: AEP 0 Ethnikos 1; Anorthosis 1 Alki 2; Doxa 1 Apollon 1.
Dec 12: ENP 1 APOP 0; Ermis 0 APOEL 2; Omonia 2 AEK 0.
Dec 13: AEL 3 Olympiakos 2.
Dec 18: APOP 3 Anorthosis 1; AEK 2 Apollon 2; APOEL 2 ENP 1; AEL 3 Doxa 0.
Dec 19: Ethnikos 0 Omonia 0; Olympiakos 3 Ermis 2.
Dec 20: Alki 2 AEP 3.

CYPRUS REGULAR	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
APOEL	15	12	2	1	33	8	38
Omonia	15	9	4	2	24	12	31
AEK	15	8	3	4	23	17	27
Apollon	15	6	3	6	23	22	21
AEL	15	5	6	4	21	20	21
Anorthosis	15	5	4	6	23	21	19
Olympiakos	15	4	7	4	22	25	19
Ethnikos	15	4	6	5	15	17	18
ENP	15	4	4	7	10	14	16
APOP	15	4	4	7	15	24	16
AEP	15	3	6	6	18	20	15
Alki	15	4	3	8	15	21	15
Ermis	15	3	5	7	16	26	14
Doxa	15	3	5	7	14	25	14

26-round regular season (13x2) top 4 will enter championship play-offs, 5th to 8th will enter placement play-offs, 9th to 12th will enter relegation play-offs (1 of them will be relegated). Bottom 2 (13th & 14th places) will be relegated automatically

CZECH REPUBLIC

CZECH REPUBLIC*	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Plzen	17	13	2	2	43	16	41
Sparta	17	12	1	4	29	11	37
Olomouc	17	9	4	4	34	14	31
Jablonec	17	9	3	5	31	19	30
M Boleslav	17	8	6	3	31	21	30
Teplice	17	7	4	6	22	23	25
Liberec	17	6	5	6	24	21	23
Boh ians 1905	17	6	4	7	19	20	22
Slovacko	17	6	2	9	17	27	20
Ostrava	17	5	4	8	19	23	19
H Kralove	17	4	6	7	12	19	18
Pribram	17	4	6	7	11	19	18
C Budejovice	17	4	6	7	13	28	18
Slavia	17	3	7	7	18	25	16
Brno	17	5	0	12	22	35	15
Usti	17	2	6	9	13	37	12

30-round season (15x2); bottom 2 will be relegated

**League now on winter break; it resumes on weekend of February 26/27*

DENMARK

DENMARK*	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Copenhagen	19	16	3	0	50	15	51
OB	19	10	2	7	36	28	32
Brondby	19	8	6	5	31	26	30
Midtjylland	18	8	5	5	31	21	29
Horsens	19	7	3	9	17	26	24
Lyngby	18	6	5	7	26	31	23
SonderjyskE	19	6	4	9	22	28	22
Silkeborg	19	5	7	7	24	31	22
Nordsjaelland	19	6	4	9	21	28	22
Randers	19	3	10	6	22	25	19
Esbjerg	19	3	8	8	22	31	17
AaB	19	3	7	9	18	30	16

33-round season (11x3); bottom 2 will be relegated

**League now on winter break; it resumes on weekend of March 5/6*

ESM EUROPEAN SPORTS MAGAZINES

GOLDEN SHOE

UP TO AND INCLUDING JANUARY 2 GAMES

POS		TEAM	GOALS	FACTOR	PTS
1	Cristiano Ronaldo	Real Madrid (Spa)	18	2	36
2	Lionel Messi	Barcelona (Spa)	17	2	34
3	Kenny Miller	Rangers (Sco)	21	1.5	31.5
4	Welliton Soares	Spartak Moscow (Rus)	19	1.5	28.5
5	Dimitar Berbatov	Manchester United (Eng)	14	2	28
	Theofanis Gekas	Eintracht Frankfurt (Ger)	14	2	28
	Moussa Sow	Lille (Fra)	14	2	28
8	Papiss Demba Cisse	Freiburg (Ger)	13	2	26
	Nene	Paris Saint-Germain (Fra)	13	2	26
10	Garra Dembele	Levski Sofia (Bul)	16	1.5	24
	Baye Djiby Fall	Molde (Nor)	16	1.5	24
	Mario Gomez	Bayern Munich (Ger)	12	2	24
	Sander Post	Flora Tallinn (Est)	24	1	24
	Carlos Tevez	Manchester City (Eng)	12	2	24
	Jelle Vossen	Genk (Blg)	16	1.5	24
16	Mohammed Abdellaoue	Valerenga (Nor)	15	1.5	22.5
17	Andy Carroll	Newcastle (Eng)	11	2	22
	Arnbjorn Hansen	EB/Streymur (Far)	22	1	22
	Christopher Hogni Jacobsen	NSI (Far)	22	1	22
	Srdjan Lakic	Kaiserslautern (Ger)	11	2	22
	Fernando Llorente	Athletic Bilbao (Spa)	11	2	22
	David Villa	Barcelona (Spa)	11	2	22
23	Oleksandr Aliyev	Lokomotiv Moscow (Rus)	14	1.5	21
	Juri Jevdokimov	Nomme Kalju (Est)	21	1	21
	Sergei Kornilenko	Rubin Kazan (Rus)	14	1.5	21
	Gary Twigg	Shamrock Rovers (Rlr)	21	1	21

WORLD SERVICE

Hurt...Park's goal celebration

FRANCE

Park forced to pull out

Monaco's South Korea striker Park Chu-Young hurt a knee while celebrating his injury-time winner against Sochaux – an accident which caused him to miss the Asian Cup in Qatar for his country.

Park was injured by his own team-mates when they jumped upon him after his 92nd-minute winner.

GEORGIA

Early success for boss

Olimpi Rustavi coach Tornike Maisuradze picked up his first trophy a week into his new job as last season's league champions won the Georgian Super Cup, beating cup winners WIT Georgia 2-0 with goals from Irakli Modebadze and Revaz Getsadze.

The 32-year-old Maisuradze, who was previously a youth coach, replaced Nestor Mumladze with the club joint-top of the league, with Zestafoni, at the winter break.

GERMANY

Leaders miss out

League leaders Borussia Dortmund ended the first half of the season with only their second defeat of the campaign, going down to an 87th-minute

Top scorer...Gekas

ENGLAND

Saturday, December 11

Aston Villa 2 (Downing 25, Heskey 80)
West Bromwich 1 (Scharner 89) Att: 37,015

Everton 0
Wigan 0 Att: 32,853

Fulham 0
Sunderland 0 Att: 24,462

Newcastle 3 (Nolan 14, Barton 79, Carroll 90)
Liverpool 1 (Kuyt 48) Att: 50,137

Stoke 0
Blackpool 1 (Campbell 48) Att: 26,879

West Ham 1 (Tomkins 89)
Manchester City 3 (Y Toure 30, Green og 73, A Johnson 81) Att: 32,813

Sunday, December 12

Bolton 2 (Muamba 64, Holden 87)
Blackburn 1 (M B Diouf 86) Att: 24,471

Tottenham 1 (Pavlyuchenko 14)
Chelsea 1 (Drogba 70) Att: 35,787

Wolverhampton 1 (Hunt 44)
Birmingham 0 Att: 25,150

Monday, December 13

Manchester United 1 (Park 41)
Arsenal 0 Att: 75,227

Saturday, December 18

Blackburn 1 (Nelsen 51)
West Ham 1 (Stanislas 78) Att: 21,934

Sunderland 1 (Welbeck 31)
Bolton 0 Att: 35,101

Monday, December 20

Manchester City 1 (Jagielka og 71)
Everton 2 (Cahill 3, Baines 19) Att: 45,028

Sunday, December 26

Aston Villa 1 (Albrighton 82)
Tottenham 2 (Van der Vaart 22, 66) Att: 39,411

Blackburn 0
Stoke 2 (Huth 51, Wilson 90) Att: 25,440

Bolton 2 (Taylor 40, Elmander 85)
West Bromwich 0 Att: 23,413

Fulham 1 (Hughes 11)
West Ham 3 (Cole 37, 73, Piquionne 45) Att: 25,332

Manchester United 2 (Berbatov 5, 56)
Sunderland 0 Att: 75,269

Newcastle 1 (Carroll 72)
Manchester City 3 (Barry 2, Tevez 4, 80) Att: 51,635

Wolverhampton 1 (Fletcher 87)
Wigan 2 (Rodallega 8, Cleverley 20) Att: 26,901

Monday, December 27

Arsenal 3 (Song 43, Fabregas 50, Walcott 53)
Chelsea 1 (Ivanovic 56) Att: 60,112

Tuesday, December 28

Birmingham 1 (Bowyer 88)
Manchester United 1 (Berbatov 57) Att: 28,242

Manchester City 4 (Balotelli pen 8, 27, pen 55, Lescott 13)
Aston Villa 0 Att: 46,716

Stoke 0
Fulham 2 (Baird 4, 9) Att: 26,954

Sunderland 0
Blackpool 2 (Campbell 49, 89) Att: 42,892

Tottenham 2 (Lennon 57, Bale 80)
Newcastle 0 Att: 35,927

West Bromwich 1 (Thomas 17)
Blackburn 3 (Kalinic 3, 52, M B Diouf 61) Att: 24,440

West Ham 1 (Hibbert og 16)
Everton 1 (Coleman 42) Att: 33,422

Wednesday, December 29

Chelsea 1 (Malouda 61)
Bolton 0 Att: 40,982

Liverpool 0
Wolverhampton 1 (Ward 56) Att: 41,614

Wigan 2 (Watson pen 18, Squillaci og 81)
Arsenal 2 (Arshavin 38, Bendtner 43) Att: 17,014

Saturday, January 1

Birmingham 0
Arsenal 3 (Van Persie 13, Nasri 58, Johnson og 65) Att: 24,341

Liverpool 2 (Fernando Torres 48, Cole 90)
Bolton 1 (K Davies 42) Att: 35,400

Manchester City 1 (A Johnson 33)
Blackpool 0 Att: 47,296

Stoke 2 (Jones 23, Jagielka og 69)
Everton 0 Att: 27,418

Sunderland 3 (Welbeck 11, Bent 19, Gyan 88)
Blackburn 0 Att: 36,242

Tottenham 1 (Bale 41)
Fulham 0 Att: 35,603

West Bromwich 1 (Morrison 13)
Manchester United 2 (Rooney 3, Hernandez 74) Att: 25,499

West Ham 2 (Zubar og 50, Sears 78)
Wolverhampton 0 Att: 33,500

Sunday, January 2

Chelsea 3 (Lampard pen 23, Drogba 84, Terry 88)
Aston Villa 3 (A Young pen 41, Heskey 47, Clark 90) Att: 41,222

Wigan 0
Newcastle 1 (Ameobi 18) Att: 15,277

ENGLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Man United	19	11	8	0	41	18	41
Man City	21	12	5	4	33	16	41
Arsenal	20	12	3	5	42	22	39
Tottenham	20	10	6	4	30	23	36
Chelsea	20	10	5	5	36	18	35
Sunderland	21	7	9	5	24	22	30
Bolton	21	7	8	6	33	28	29
Stoke	20	8	3	9	25	24	27
Liverpool	19	7	4	8	23	24	25
Newcastle	20	7	4	9	29	31	25
Blackpool	18	7	4	7	26	30	25
Blackburn	21	7	4	10	26	34	25
Everton	20	4	10	6	21	24	22
West Brom	20	6	4	10	26	36	22
Aston Villa	20	5	6	9	23	37	21
West Ham	21	4	8	9	22	33	20
Wigan	20	4	8	8	17	32	20
Fulham	20	3	10	7	19	24	19
Birmingham	19	3	10	6	18	24	19
Wolves	20	5	3	12	20	34	18

38-round season (19x2); bottom 3 will be relegated

LEADING GOALSCORERS

14 Dimitar Berbatov (Manchester United)
12 Carlos Tevez (Manchester City)
11 Andy Carroll (Newcastle)
9 Tim Cahill (Everton)
9 Didier Drogba (Chelsea)
9 Johan Elmander (Bolton)
9 Samir Nasri (Arsenal)

FRANCE

Saturday, December 11

Arles-Avignon 0
Lille 1 (De Melo 90+3) Att: 7,955

Auxerre 1 (Birsa pen 40)
Marseille 1 (Remy 7) Att: 16,104

Brest 0
Montpellier 0 Att: 11,933

Caen 0
Nice 0 Att: 12,350

Lorient 3 (Amalfitano 49, Kitambala 56, Mvuemba 74)
Lens 0 Att: 15,347

Nancy 1 (Andre Luiz 73)
Sochaux 0 Att: 13,401

Valenciennes 1 (Aboubakar 82)
Paris Saint-Germain 2 (Nene 46, 83) Att: 11,136

Sunday, December 12

Bordeaux 0
Rennes 0 Att: 19,991

Lyon 2 (Lopez 4, Gomis 35)
Toulouse 0 Att: 32,544

Monaco 0
Saint-Etienne 2 (Batlles 19, Sako 77) Att: 6,696

Saturday, December 18

Montpellier 1 (Belhanda 58)
Auxerre 1 (Traore 75) Att: 14,842

Nice 1 (Ljuboja 7)
Brest 1 (Martial 14) Att: 9,248

Paris Saint-Germain 2 (Nene 39, 51)
Monaco 2 (Puygrenier 31, Niculae 88) Att: 32,842

Rennes 1 (Kana-Biyik 90+4)
Valenciennes 0 Att: 20,112

Saint-Etienne 2 (Batlles 51, Riviere 52)
Arles-Avignon 0 Att: 21,883

Toulouse 3 (Machado 15, pen 59, Santander 66)
Lorient 0 Att: 26,027

Sunday, December 19

Marseille 1 (Valbuena 51)
Lyon 1 (Lopez 35) Att: 54,290

Sochaux 1 (Brown 35)
Bordeaux 1 (Jussie 28) Att: 12,030

Tuesday, December 21

Lorient 0
Montpellier 0 Att: 16,126

Wednesday, December 22

Arles-Avignon 0
Nice 0 Att: 9,085

Bordeaux 2 (Diarra 66, Gouffran 90+2)
Lens 2 (Eduardo 14, Boukari 45+2) Att: 24,014

Brest 0
Marseille 0 Att: 15,300

Caen 1 (Hamouma 9)
Rennes 0 Att: 14,500

Lille 1 (Sow 72)
Saint-Etienne 1 (Sako pen 74) Att: 16,783

Lyon 1 (Mignot og 45+1)
Auxerre 1 (Quercia 46) Att: 38,825

Monaco 2 (Malonga 8, Park 90+2)
Sochaux 1 (Lolo og 47) Att: 4,984

Nancy 2 (Hadji 66, 82)
Paris Saint-Germain 0 Att: 17,845

Valenciennes 2 (Angoua 44, Danic 45+2)
Toulouse 1 (Sissoko 35) Att: 9,852

FRANCE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Lille	18	8	8	2	33	21	32
PSG	19	8	7	4	30	21	31
Rennes	19	8	7	4	18	12	31
Lyon	19	8	7	4	26	21	31
Marseille	19	7	8	4	27	17	29
Saint-Etienne	19	7	8	4	26	20	29
Brest	19	7	7	5	20	15	28
Bordeaux	19	6	9	4	24	21	27
Toulouse	19	8	3	8	21	20	27
Montpellier	19	7	6	6	15	19	27
Sochaux	19	7	4	8	29	23	25
Lorient	19	7	4	8	22	24	25
Nancy	18	7	4	7	21	26	25
Auxerre	19	4	11	4	25	22	23
Nice	19	5	8	6	14	18	23
Valenciennes	19	5	7	7	21	21	22
Monaco	19	3	10	6	19	20	19
Caen	18	4	6	8	17	26	18
Lens	18	3	7	8	17	32	16
Arles-Avignon	19	1	5	13	10	36	8

38-round season (19x2); bottom 3 will be relegated

goal from the Bundesliga's top scorer Theofanis Gekas in a 1-0 loss to Eintracht Frankfurt.

The result meant that Dortmund missed out on equalling Bayern Munich's record haul of 44 points prior to the winter break, a mark that was set during the 2005-06 season.

Meanwhile, a resurgent Bayern put 11 goals past Stuttgart in the space of four days, following up their 5-3 Bundesliga win against Bruno Labbadia's side with a 6-3 win in the German Cup.

Bayern, who are the cup holders, now meet second-tier Alemannia Aachen – who beat Eintracht Frankfurt on penalties – in the quarter-finals. Other 2.Bundesliga sides to reach the last eight are Energie Cottbus, who beat Wolfsburg 3-1, and Duisburg, who won 2-1 at bottom-of-the-league Koln.

GREECE

Pana to pay penalty

Panathinaikos are likely to be punished by the Greek Super League after fans chased their own players off the pitch and threw missiles following a 1-0 home defeat by Volos. The result left the team five points adrift of leaders Olympiakos at the halfway point, a situation which prompted club president Nikos Pateras to step down.

Out...Van Dijk

HOLLAND

Van Dijk on his way

VVV Venlo, who are second from bottom of the Eredivisie, sacked Jan Van Dijk.

HUNGARY

Champs change coach

Czech coach Zdenek Scasny has replaced Andras Herczeg in charge of Hungarian title-holders Debrecen.

LEADING GOALSCORERS

14	Moussa Sow (Lille)
13	Nene (Paris Saint-Germain)
10	Youssef El Arabi (Caen)
8	Ideye Brown (Sochaux)
8	Kevin Gameiro (Lorient)
8	Lisandro Lopez (Lyon)
8	Dimitri Payet (Saint-Etienne)

GERMANY

Friday, December 10

Hannover 2 (Ya Konan 34, 76)
Stuttgart 1 (Niedermeier 73) Att: 36,207

Saturday, December 11

Bayern Munich 3 (Altintop 16, Lahm pen 72, Ribery 78)
St Pauli 0 Att: 69,000

Borussia Dortmund 2 (Sahin 9, Kagawa 69)
Werder Bremen 0 Att: 80,720

Hamburg 2 (Vidal og 48, Elia 78)
Bayer Leverkusen 4 (Sam 30, Vidal 61, Renato Augusto 65, Rost og 78) Att: 51,225

1899 Hoffenheim 1 (Compper 54)
Nurnberg 1 (Eigler 87) Att: 30,150

Kaiserslautern 0
Wolfsburg 0 Att: 38,181

Koln 1 (Clemens 56)
Eintracht Frankfurt 0 Att: 45,000

Sunday, December 12

Freiburg 3 (Cisse 19, 58, Barth 40)
Monchengladbach 0 Att: 22,700

Mainz 0
Schalke 1 (Farfan 29) Att: 20,300

Friday, December 17

Monchengladbach 1 (De Camargo 48)
Hamburg 2 (Elia 46, Trochowski 72) Att: 42,253

Saturday, December 18

Eintracht Frankfurt 1 (Gekas 87)
Borussia Dortmund 0 Att: 51,500

Nurnberg 3 (Cherundolo og 28, Wolf 31, Schieber 81)
Hannover 1 (Pinto pen 75) Att: 33,111

Schalke 3 (Raul 29, 50, 86)
Koln 0 Att: 61,673

St Pauli 2 (Lehmann pen 33, 63)
Mainz 4 (Schurrle 10, 28, Szalai 41, Caligiuri 82) Att: 24,235

Werder Bremen 1 (Hunt pen 33)
Kaiserslautern 2 (Lakic 1, 52) Att: 35,135

Wolfsburg 2 (Diego 75, Dzeko 90+1)
1899 Hoffenheim 2 (Luiz Gustavo 33, Sigurdsson 40) Att: 24,512

Sunday, December 19

Bayer Leverkusen 2 (Vidal pen 16, Helmes 75)
Freiburg 2 (Rosenthal 23, Reisinger 64) Att: 22,421

Stuttgart 3 (Harnik 49, 63, Gentner 69)
Bayern Munich 5 (Gomez 30, 52, 54, Muller 35, Ribery 42) Att: 40,500

GERMANY

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
B Dortmund	17	14	1	2	39	10	43
Mainz	17	11	0	6	30	19	33
B Leverkusen	17	9	6	2	35	25	33
Hannover	17	10	1	6	25	27	31
Bayern	17	8	5	4	31	20	29
Freiburg	17	9	1	7	25	25	28
E Frankfurt	17	8	2	7	24	21	26
Hoffenheim	17	6	7	4	32	22	25
Hamburg	17	7	3	7	27	28	24
Schalke	17	6	4	7	25	24	22
Nurnberg	17	6	4	7	22	28	22
Kaiserslautern	17	6	3	8	27	27	21
Wolfsburg	17	4	7	6	24	25	19
Werder	17	5	4	8	23	35	19
St Pauli	17	5	2	10	16	30	17
Koln	17	4	3	10	18	33	15
Stuttgart	17	3	3	11	32	35	12
M gladbach	17	2	4	11	26	47	10

34-round season (17x2); bottom 2 will be relegated; 3rd bottom will enter rel/prom play-off

LEADING GOALSCORERS

14	Theofanis Gekas (Eintracht Frankfurt)
13	Papiss Demba Cisse (Freiburg)
12	Mario Gomez (Bayern Munich)
11	Srdjan Lakic (Kaiserslautern)
10	Edin Dzeko (Wolfsburg)

GREECE

Dec 11: Volos 1 Aris 1; PAOK 1 Iraklis 0.
Dec 12: Panserraikos 1 Panionios 1; Xanthi 1 Kavala 1; Ergotelis 3 Kerkyra 0; AEK 4 Larissa 0; Olympiakos 2 Atromitos 1; Asteras 0 Panathinaikos 0.
Dec 18: Kavala 1 Atromitos 1; Panionios 0 Asteras 0; Ergotelis 2 Panserraikos 0; Panathinaikos 0 Volos 1.
Dec 19: Aris 0 Xanthi 2; Kerkyra 2 PAOK 1; Iraklis 2 AEK 0; Larissa 0 Olympiakos 1.

GREECE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Olympiakos	15	12	0	3	29	7	36
Panathinaikos	15	9	4	2	23	11	31
PAOK	15	7	2	6	16	16	23
AEK	15	7	2	6	23	16	23
Kavala	15	5	6	4	15	13	21
Xanthi	15	5	6	4	15	16	21
Ergotelis	15	6	2	7	16	19	20
Volos	15	4	8	3	16	15	20
Aris	15	6	2	7	10	13	20
Iraklis	15	4	7	4	13	13	19
Kerkyra	15	5	4	6	14	18	19
Asteras	15	3	7	5	10	14	16
Atromitos	15	3	7	5	14	18	16
Panserraikos	15	4	3	8	12	20	15
Panionios	15	4	3	8	9	18	15
Larissa	15	2	5	8	10	18	11

30-round season (15x2); bottom 3 will be relegated. Teams finishing 2nd to 5th will enter play-offs for Greece s 2nd Champions League place

HOLLAND

Dec 10: Heracles 2 VVV 2.
Dec 11: NAC 3 Utrecht 1; Roda JC 1 Den Haag 1; NEC 3 Willem II 1; De Graafschap 0 PSV 0.
Dec 12: Vitesse 0 Ajax 1; Feyenoord 1 Excelsior 0; Groningen 2 AZ 0; Heerenveen 6 Twente 2.
Dec 14: VVV 0 Roda JC 4.
Dec 15: Excelsior 1 NAC 3.
Dec 18: Heerenveen 4 De Graafschap 0; Excelsior 2 Groningen 2; NAC 1 Vitesse 1; Den Haag 2 Willem II 1.
Dec 19: PSV 3 Roda JC 1.

HOLLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
PSV	19	12	5	2	53	19	41
Twente	18	11	4	3	35	21	37
Groningen	19	11	4	4	37	24	37
Ajax	18	10	5	3	37	17	35
Roda JC	19	8	8	3	32	24	32
AZ	18	9	5	4	25	18	32
Heerenveen	19	8	6	5	40	26	30
Den Haag	19	8	5	6	31	30	29
NAC*	19	9	3	7	29	28	29
Utrecht	18	8	2	8	30	26	26
NEC	18	6	5	7	31	33	23
De Graafschap	19	5	6	8	21	37	21
Feyenoord	18	5	5	8	23	33	20
Heracles	18	5	4	9	30	34	19
Vitesse	19	4	6	9	21	33	18
Excelsior	19	4	4	11	22	36	16
VVV	18	3	1	14	17	40	10
Willem II	19	0	4	15	16	51	4

34-round season (17x2); bottom team will be relegated; 2nd & 3rd bottom will enter rel/prom play-offs
**1pt deducted for financial mismanagement*

ISRAEL

Regular season

Dec 11: Maccabi Tel Aviv 1 Maccabi Petah Tikva 1; Ramat Gan 1 Hapoel Petah Tikva 1; Hapoel Haifa 2 Ashdod 0; Ashkelon 1 Bnei Sakhnin 0; Netanya 1 Be er Sheva 0; Acre 3 Beitar 0.
Dec 13: Kiryat Shmona 0 Maccabi Haifa 1.
Dec 15: Bnei Yehuda 0 Hapoel Tel Aviv 1.
Dec 18: Maccabi Haifa 3 Netanya 0; Maccabi Petah Tikva 3 Bnei Yehuda 0; Bnei Sakhnin 0 Acre 1; Ashdod 3 Ashkelon 2; Hapoel Tel Aviv 4 Ramat Gan 0; Beitar 1 Kiryat Shmona 0.
Dec 19: Hapoel Petah Tikva 2 Hapoel Haifa 0.
Dec 20: Be er Sheva 0 Maccabi Tel Aviv 1.
Jan 1: Hapoel Tel Aviv 5 Hapoel Haifa 0; Ramat Gan 1 Bnei Yehuda 1; Ashdod 3 Acre 1; Bnei Sakhnin 1 Kiryat Shmona 0; Be er Sheva 2 Maccabi Petah Tikva 1; Beitar 0 Netanya 0.
Jan 2: Hapoel Petah Tikva 0 Ashkelon 2.
Jan 3: Maccabi Haifa 3 Maccabi Tel Aviv 0.

ISRAEL R EGULAR

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
M Haifa	16	11	4	1	29	12	37
H Tel Aviv	16	11	2	3	38	16	35
M Tel Aviv	16	9	2	5	20	12	29
Kiryat Shmona	16	7	5	4	27	19	26
M Petah Tikva	16	7	4	5	27	19	25
Acre	16	7	4	5	30	23	25
Be er Sheva	16	7	4	5	19	17	25
Ashdod	16	6	5	5	24	22	23
H Haifa	16	6	4	6	18	23	22
Netanya	16	5	5	6	17	20	20
Beitar	16	5	4	7	21	23	19
Bnei Yehuda	16	4	6	6	13	18	18
Ashkelon	16	4	4	8	14	28	16
H Petah Tikva	16	3	4	9	15	28	13
Bnei Sakhnin	16	3	2	11	10	26	11
Ramat Gan*	16	1	5	10	13	29	4

30-round regular season (15x2) top 6 will enter championship play-offs, 7th to 10th will enter placement play-offs, bottom 6 will enter relegation play-offs (2 will go down)
**4pts deducted for contract irregularities*

ITALY

Wednesday, December 8

Bologna 2 (Britos 40, Di Vaio 90+3)
Chievo 1 (Cesar 49) Att: 13,764

Saturday, December 11

Genoa 0
Napoli 1 (Hamsik 25) Att: 24,288

Palermo 3 (Pinilla 50, Miccoli 61, Zaccardo og 89)
Parma 1 (Lucarelli 6) Att: 24,000

Udinese 2 (Armero 62, Di Natale 80)
Fiorentina 1 (Santana 31) Att: 8,000

Sunday, December 12

Bologna 0
Milan 3 (Boateng 9, Robinho 34, Ibrahimovic 59) Att: 24,915

Brescia 1 (Cordova 12)
Sampdoria 0 Att: 11,043

Cagliari 3 (Nene 11, 26, 71)
Catania 0 Att: 15,000

Juventus 2 (Chiellini 2, Krasic 90+4)
Lazio 1 (Zarate 14) Att: 20,098

Lecce 3 (Ofere 15, Piatti 45+1, 69)
Chievo 2 (Bogliacino 55, Mandelli 90) Att: 5,824

Roma 1 (Juan 30)
Bari 0 Att: 28,187

Saturday, December 18

Cesena 1 (Jimenez 16)
Cagliari 0 Att: 12,851

Milan 0
Roma 1 (Borriello 68) Att: 53,769

Sunday, December 19

Bari 1 (A Masiello pen 53)
Palermo 1 (Ilicic 45+2) Att: 15,112

Catania 1 (Lopez 32)
Brescia 0 Att: 10,183

Chievo 1 (Pellissier 90+3)
Juventus 1 (Quagliarella 31) Att: 22,819

Lazio 3 (Hernanes 2, Biava 52, Zapata og 88)
Udinese 2 (Sanchez 50, Denis 61) Att: 20,644

Napoli 1 (Cavani 90+3)
Lecce 0 Att: 44,113

Parma 0
Bologna 0 Att: 13,223

PORTUGAL

Porto lose at last

Porto lost for the first time in 37 games, going down 2-1 at home to Nacional in the Portuguese League Cup. They were unbeaten since losing in the Final of last season's competition to Benfica – who started their defence of the trophy this term with a 2-0 home win against Maritimo.

RUSSIA

Duo drop out

Amkar Perm and Saturn Ramenskoye have quit the Russian Premier League due to mounting debt. Amkar, who narrowly avoided relegation last year, said their decision was because "accumulated debt of 167 million roubles (£3.5m) and negotiations with potential sponsors have not materialised".

SPAIN

Barca go to the States

Barcelona will tour the USA in the summer, playing friendlies against Manchester United in Washington DC on July 30, Milan in Miami on August 3 and America of Mexico in Dallas on August 6.

Prior to that, Barca will play friendlies in Germany and Croatia against as-yet unknown opponents.

Broke...Saturn (left) and Amkar Perm

ITALY

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Milan	17	11	3	3	29	13	36
Napoli	17	10	3	4	26	17	33
Lazio	17	10	3	4	24	16	33
Juventus	17	8	7	2	32	17	31
Roma	17	8	5	4	22	20	29
Palermo	17	8	3	6	29	22	27
Inter	15	6	5	4	20	14	23
Sampdoria	16	5	8	3	18	13	23
Udinese	17	7	2	8	21	21	23
Chievo	17	5	6	6	19	19	21
Genoa	16	6	3	7	13	15	21
Catania	17	5	6	6	14	18	21
Cagliari	17	5	5	7	19	16	20
Bologna*	17	5	6	6	16	23	20
Fiorentina	16	5	4	7	16	17	19
Parma	17	4	7	6	14	20	19
Brescia	17	4	3	10	12	21	15
Cesena	16	4	3	9	11	20	15
Lecce	17	4	3	10	16	34	15
Bari	17	2	5	10	11	26	11

38-round season (19x2); bottom 3 will be relegated
**1pt deducted for failing to pay tax on players salaries*

LEADING GOALSCORERS

10 Edinson Cavani (Napoli)
10 Antonio Di Natale (Udinese)
9 Marco Di Vaio (Bologna)
9 Samuel Eto o (Internazionale)
9 Zlatan Ibrahimovic (Milan)
9 Fabio Quagliarella (Juventus)

POLAND

POLAND*

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Jagiellonia	15	9	3	3	22	13	30
Wisla	15	8	3	4	21	15	27
Legia	15	9	0	6	19	19	27
Korona	15	7	4	4	20	17	25
Belchatow	15	7	2	6	19	18	23
Lechia	15	7	2	6	22	18	23
Gornik	15	7	1	7	15	25	22
Polonia W	15	5	5	5	23	18	20
Slask	15	5	5	5	21	20	20
Zaglebie	15	5	4	6	13	16	19
Lech	15	5	4	6	18	14	19
Widzew	15	4	6	5	23	18	18
Polonia B	15	4	5	6	13	16	17
Ruch	15	4	5	6	12	14	17
Arka	15	4	5	6	9	14	17
Cracovia	15	2	2	11	16	31	8

30-round season (15x2); bottom 2 will be relegated
**League now on winter break; it resumes on weekend of February 26/27*

PORTUGAL

Dec 6: Nacional 2 Naval 1.
Dec 8: Academica 1 Maritimo 5.
Dec 17: Braga 5 Academica 0.
Dec 18: Benfica 5 Rio Ave 2; Beira Mar 3 Guimaraes 2.
Dec 19: Maritimo 1 Portimonense 1; Naval 0 Uniao Leiria 3; Olhanense 0 Nacional 0; Pacos Ferreira 0 Porto 3.
Dec 20: Setubal 0 Sporting 3.

PORTUGAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Porto	14	12	2	0	32	5	38
Benfica	14	10	0	4	27	14	30
Sporting	14	7	4	3	20	13	25
Uniao Leiria	14	7	3	4	17	14	24
Guimaraes	14	6	4	4	19	17	22
Nacional	14	6	3	5	14	15	21
Braga	14	6	2	6	25	19	20
Beira Mar	14	4	7	3	17	18	19
Academica	14	5	3	6	20	25	18
Maritimo	14	3	7	4	13	10	16
Olhanense	14	3	7	4	11	13	16
P Ferreira	14	3	6	5	12	18	15
Rio Ave	14	3	5	6	15	20	14
Setubal	14	3	4	7	8	17	13
Portimonense	14	2	3	9	13	25	9
Naval	14	1	2	11	7	27	5

30-round season (15x2); bottom 2 will be relegated

ROMANIA

ROMANIA*

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Otelul	18	12	3	3	23	14	39
Timisoara	18	8	10	0	30	21	34
Vaslui	18	9	5	4	25	18	32
Rapid	18	8	6	4	28	12	30
Gaz Metan	18	8	6	4	23	16	30
Dinamo	18	8	5	5	40	31	29
Steaua	18	8	5	5	25	16	29
CFR	18	7	6	5	30	24	27
Astra	18	4	9	5	19	20	21
Univ Craiova	18	5	5	8	23	21	20
Gloria	18	5	5	8	21	26	20
Brasov	18	4	8	6	16	22	20
Tirgu-Mures	18	5	5	8	19	28	20
Univ Cluj	18	5	5	8	21	33	20
Victoria	18	4	6	8	24	32	18
Pandurii	18	4	6	8	17	25	18
Urziceni	18	4	6	8	12	22	18
Sportul	18	3	1	14	19	34	10

34-round season (17x2); bottom 4 will be relegated
**League now on winter break; it resumes on weekend of February 19/20*

SCOTLAND

Regular season

Dec 11: Inverness 1 Rangers 1; St Mirren 1 St Johnstone 2; Hearts 5 Aberdeen 0.
Dec 14: Motherwell 1 Hearts 2.
Dec 18: Kilmarnock 2 Hibernian 1; Hearts 1 Inverness 1.
Dec 21: Celtic 1 Kilmarnock 1.
Dec 26: Celtic 2 St Johnstone 0; Hibernian 1 Aberdeen 2; Inverness 1 St Mirren 2; Motherwell 1 Rangers 4.
Dec 29: Hamilton 0 Aberdeen 1; Hibernian 2 Dundee United 2; Celtic 1 Motherwell 0; Inverness 1 Kilmarnock 3; St Mirren 0 Hearts 2.
Jan 1: Hearts 1 Hibernian 0; Aberdeen 1 Dundee United 1; Hamilton 0 Motherwell 0.
Jan 2: Rangers 0 Celtic 2; St Johnstone 1 Inverness 0.
Jan 3: St Mirren 0 Kilmarnock 2.

SCOTLAND REGULAR

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Celtic	19	14	3	2	41	13	45
Rangers	17	13	2	2	39	19	41
Hearts	19	12	3	4	33	15	39
Kilmarnock	19	9	3	7	32	21	30
Inverness	20	7	6	7	30	26	27
Motherwell	18	7	3	8	24	23	24
Dundee Utd	16	5	6	5	18	23	21
St Johnstone	18	6	3	9	13	25	21
Aberdeen	19	5	2	12	19	38	17
Hibernian	19	4	4	11	21	32	16
St Mirren	19	4	4	11	17	33	16
Hamilton	17	2	5	10	11	30	11

33-round regular season (11x3) top 6 will form championship group, bottom 6 will form relegation group (1 will be relegated)

SERBIA

SERBIA*

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Partizan	15	13	1	1	41	11	40
Red Star	15	11	2	2	21	8	35
Vojvodina	15	9	5	1	23	5	32
Rad	15	8	4	3	21	9	28
S Sevojno	15	6	5	4	19	17	23
Spartak	15	5	6	4	15	12	21
Javor	15	5	6	4	12	12	21
Smederevo	15	4	8	3	16	15	20
Jagodina	15	5	5	5	13	13	20
OFK	15	5	4	6	13	13	19
BSK	15	4	5	6	10	20	17
Indjija	15	3	4	8	13	21	13
Borac	15	2	7	6	7	18	13
Metalac	15	2	3	10	9	25	9
Hajduk	15	1	5	9	9	20	8
Cukaricki	15	0	4	11	5	28	4

30-round season (15x2); bottom 2 will be relegated
**League now on winter break; it resumes on weekend of February 26/27*

SLOVAKIA

SLOVAKIA*

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Zilina	18	10	7	1	38	16	37
Senica	18	9	4	5	22	19	31
Dukla	18	8	6	4	23	12	30
Spartak	18	7	8	3	22	9	29
Slovan	18	6	7	5	28	17	25
Zlate Moravce	18	6	6	6	20	20	24
DAC	18	6	6	6	16	16	24
Nitra	18	6	4	8	15	26	22
Ruzomberok	18	5	5	8	14	22	20
Kosice	18	4	5	9	18	27	17
Tatran	18	4	5	9	12	22	17
Dubnica	18	4	3	11	13	35	15

33-round season (11x3); bottom team will be relegated
**League now on winter break; it resumes on weekend of February 26/27*

SPAIN

Saturday, December 11

Atletico Madrid 2 (Aguero 8, 35)
Deportivo La Coruna 0 Att: 35,000

Getafe 1 (Albin 88)
Villarreal 0 Att: 10,000

Sevilla 1 (Kanoute 83)
Almeria 3 (Vargas 47, Piatti 80, 89) Att: 35,000

Sunday, December 12

Athletic Bilbao 2 (Llorente 72, David Lopez 77)
Espanyol 1 (Osvaldo 33) Att: 35,000

Barcelona 5 (Villa 9, Iniesta 33, Messi 47, 87, Bojan 90)
Real Sociedad 0 Att: 74,931

Hercules 4 (Trezeguet 65, Drenthe pen 69, Abraham Paz 72, Kiko 81)
Malaga 1 (Fernandez 12) Att: 17,000

Mallorca 0
Racing Santander 1 (Serrano 90) Att: 12,350

Sporting Gijon 1 (Eguren 79)
Levante 1 (Caicedo 72) Att: 18,000

Zaragoza 1 (Gabi pen 54)
Real Madrid 3 (Ozil 14, Cristiano Ronaldo 43, Di Maria 46) Att: 26,000

Monday, December 13

Valencia 3 (Soldado 23, Stankevicius 32, Aduriz 42)
Osasuna 3 (Juanfran 40, Miguel Flano 60, Aranda 87) Att: 40,000

Saturday, December 18

Deportivo La Coruna 1 (Aythami 12)
Sporting Gijon 1 (Diego Castro 89) Att: 17,000

Espanyol 1 (Osvaldo 63)
Barcelona 5 (Pedro 18, 59, Xavi 30, Villa 76, 83) Att: 40,010

Levante 1 (Caicedo 20)
Athletic Bilbao 2 (Gabilondo 9, Javi Martinez 72) Att: 11,000

Real Sociedad 1 (Xabi Prieto pen 23)
Valencia 2 (Tino Costa 45, Aduriz 90+1) Att: 30,000

Villarreal 3 (Cazorla 11, Rossi pen 34, Nilmar 51)
Mallorca 1 (De Guzman 28) Att: 20,000

Sunday, December 19

Almeria 2 (Uche 7, Ulloa 24)
Getafe 3 (Manu 28, Miku 47, Boateng 69) Att: 11,600

Malaga 0
Atletico Madrid 3 (Tiago 21, 69, Dominguez 66) Att: 29,000

Osasuna 0
Zaragoza 0 Att: 15,624

Real Madrid 1 (Di Maria 76)
Sevilla 0 Att: 72,000

Monday, December 20

Racing Santander 0
Hercules 0 Att: 12,848

Sunday, January 2

Athletic Bilbao 1 (Llorente 86)
Deportivo La Coruna 2 (Adrian pen 21, 51) Att: 35,000

Barcelona 2 (Pedro 47, 59)
Levante 1 (Stuani 80) Att: 71,681

Sevilla 1 (Kanoute 34)
Osasuna 0 Att: 31,000

Sporting Gijon 1 (Diego Castro pen 42)
Malaga 2 (Weligton 44, Apono pen 58) Att: 18,000

TURKEY

Top of the tree

Trabzonspor scored three times in the final seven minutes against Karabukspor to end 2010 top of the Turkish Super Lig – the first time they have led the league at this stage for 15 years.

The visitors looked set for a point until an own goal from Engin Akturk was followed by further strikes from Burak Yilmaz and Engin Baytar secured the points for Trabzonspor, who have not won the title since 1984.

UKRAINE

Semin back in charge

Yuri Semin returned to Dynamo Kyiv for a second spell as coach. The 63-year-old Russian, who was sacked by Lokomotiv Moscow last year, replaces Valery Gazzaev.

WALES

Summer switch debate

The Welsh Premier League is considering a switch to summer football for a two-year trial period. "It's a simple solution that could help all of our problems," said league secretary John Deakin.

Welsh clubs have often bemoaned their winter league disadvantage when playing Scandinavian or Baltic opposition in the early stages of European football as their qualifying rivals are often halfway through their season as they play in the summer – giving them an advantage when playing Welsh clubs in June, just weeks after the start of their pre-season training.

Meanwhile, Bangor City's run of 15 consecutive league wins since the start of the season came to an end with a 1-1 draw away to Airbus UK.

Returning...Semin

Valencia 2 (Aduriz 29, Mata 90+2)
Espanyol 1 (Ricardo Costa og 45) Att: 30,000

Monday, January 3
Atletico Madrid 0
Racing Santander 0 Att: 35,000

Getafe 2 (Parejo 29, Albin 85)
Real Madrid 3 (Cristiano Ronaldo pen 10, 57, Ozil 19) Att: 11,000

Mallorca 3 (Nsue 37, Victor 41, Pereira 51)
Hercules 0 Att: 9,000

Villarreal 2 (Catala 22, Borja Valero 58)
Almeria 0 Att: 18,000

Zaragoza 2 (Sinama-Pongolle 9, Braulio 90)
Real Sociedad 1 (Xabi Prieto 33) Att: 20,000

SPAIN

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Barcelona	17	15	1	1	53	10	46
Real Madrid	17	14	2	1	42	14	44
Villarreal	17	11	3	3	32	14	36
Valencia	17	9	4	4	26	20	31
Espanyol	17	9	1	7	19	24	28
At Madrid	17	8	3	6	27	19	27
Getafe	17	8	2	7	28	25	26
Ath Bilbao	17	8	1	8	26	29	25
Mallorca	17	7	3	7	19	20	24
Sevilla	17	7	2	8	22	27	23
R Sociedad	17	7	1	9	23	28	22
Dep Coruna	17	5	6	6	15	20	21
Hercules	17	5	4	8	18	25	19
R Santander	17	5	4	8	13	23	19
Osasuna	17	4	5	8	15	21	17
Malaga	17	5	1	11	22	36	16
Levante	17	4	3	10	19	28	15
Zaragoza	17	2	7	8	16	28	13
Almeria	17	2	7	8	15	27	13
Sporting Gijon	17	2	6	9	14	26	12

38-round season (19x2); bottom 3 will be relegated

LEADING GOALSCORERS

20	Cristiano Ronaldo (Real Madrid)
17	Lionel Messi (Barcelona)
11	Fernando Llorente (Athletic Bilbao)
11	David Villa (Barcelona)
10	Nilmar (Villarreal)
9	Giuseppe Rossi (Villarreal)

SWITZERLAND

Dec 11: Thun 0 Bellinzona 0; Lucerne 1 Zurich 1.
Dec 12: Grasshopper 2 Basle 1; Young Boys 1 St Gallen 1; Xamax 0 Sion 3.

SWITZERLAND*

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Lucerne	18	9	6	3	42	24	33
Basle	18	9	5	4	37	26	32
Zurich	18	8	7	3	34	25	31
Sion	18	7	6	5	29	18	27
Young Boys	18	6	7	5	24	25	25
Thun	18	4	11	3	24	21	23
Bellinzona	18	4	7	7	25	36	19
Xamax	18	5	3	10	27	38	18
St Gallen	18	5	2	11	18	35	17
Grasshopper	18	3	6	9	19	31	15

36-round season (9x4); bottom team will be relegated; 2nd bottom will enter rel/prom play-off
**League now on winter break; it resumes on weekend of February 5/6*

TURKEY

Dec 10: Eskisehirspor 2 Besiktas 0.
Dec 11: Karabukspor 2 Antalyaspor 0; Bucaspor 1 Manisaspor 1; Galatasaray 0 Genclerbirligi 2.
Dec 12: Sivasspor 1 Konyaspor 0; Istanbul BB 1 Trabzonspor 3; Gaziantepspor 2 Kayserispor 0; Ankaragucu 2 Fenerbahce 1.
Dec 13: Bursaspor 2 Kasimpasa 1.
Dec 17: Trabzonspor 3 Karabukspor 0.
Dec 18: Kayserispor 2 Bucaspor 0; Genclerbirligi 1 Bursaspor 5; Antalyaspor 2 Ankaragucu 2; Fenerbahce 1 Sivasspor 0.
Dec 19: Manisaspor 1 Istanbul BB 0; Konyaspor 0 Galatasaray 1; Kasimpasa 0 Eskisehirspor 2; Besiktas 1 Gaziantepspor 1.

TURKEY

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Trabzonspor	17	13	3	1	40	10	42
Bursaspor	17	11	4	2	32	12	37
Fenerbahce	17	10	3	4	40	21	33
Kayserispor	17	9	5	3	22	12	32
Besiktas	17	8	4	5	25	18	28
Karabukspor	17	7	3	7	28	27	24
Gaziantepspor	17	6	6	5	15	15	24
Istanbul BB	17	7	2	8	20	18	23
Galatasaray	17	7	2	8	19	21	23
Antalyaspor	17	6	5	6	19	22	23
Eskisehirspor	17	5	7	5	17	17	22
Manisaspor	17	7	1	9	22	25	22
Ankaragucu	17	5	6	6	24	29	21
Genclerbirligi	17	4	5	8	16	28	17
Sivasspor	17	3	6	8	17	32	15
Konyaspor	17	3	5	9	17	27	14
Bucaspor	17	2	6	9	9	23	12
Kasimpasa	17	1	5	11	14	39	8

34-round season (17x2); bottom 3 will be relegated

UKRAINE

UKRAINE*

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Shakhtar	19	17	1	1	38	7	52
Dynamo	19	12	4	3	35	17	40
Metalist	19	12	2	5	38	19	38
Dnipro	19	10	5	4	27	11	35
Karpaty	19	9	5	5	24	18	32
Volyn	19	8	4	7	20	21	28
Arsenal	19	7	4	8	22	24	25
Vorskla	19	6	5	8	24	22	23
Tavriya	19	6	5	8	30	31	23
Metalurh D	19	6	4	9	21	29	22
Obolon	19	6	4	9	16	24	22
Zorya	19	4	7	8	20	28	19
Kryvbas	19	3	9	7	18	27	18
Illichivets	19	4	6	9	26	45	18
Sevastopol	19	3	5	11	12	32	14
Metalurh Z	19	2	4	13	8	24	10

30-round season (15x2); bottom 2 will be relegated
**League now on winter break; it resumes on weekend of March 5/6*

SOUTH AMERICA

SUDAMERICANA CUP

Final

1st leg

Dec 1
Goias (Bra) 2 (Rafael Moura 15, Otacilio Neto 21)
Independiente (Arg) 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 35,500. **Ref:** Torres (Par)
Goias: Harlei - Ernando, Rafael Toloi, Marcao, Douglas, Amaral, Carlos Alberto, Marcelo Costa (Felipe 86), Wellington Saci, Otacilio Neto (Everton Santos 69), Rafael Moura.
Independiente: Navarro - J Velazquez, Tuzzio, Galeano, Cabrera (Matheu 79), Fredes (M Velazquez 87), Godoy (Rodriguez 46), Battion, Mareque, Parra, Silvera. *Sent off: Silvera 57min.*

2nd leg

Dec 8
Independiente 3 (J Velazquez 19, Parra 27, 34)
Goias 1 (Rafael Moura 22)
Aet. **HT:** 3-1. **90mins:** 3-1. **Ref:** Ruiz (Col)
Agg 3-3. Independiente 5-3 on pens
Independiente: Navarro - J Velazquez, Tuzzio, Matheu, Mareque, Cabrera, Battion, Fredes (M Velazquez 107), Rodriguez (Gracian 71), Parra, Martinez (Gomez 65).
Goias: Harlei - Douglas (Everton Santos 64), Rafael Toloi, Ernando, Marcao, Wellington Saci, Carlos Alberto, Amaral, Marcelo Costa, Rafael Moura, Otacilio Neto (Felipe 75).

PREVIOUS WINNERS

2002	San Lorenzo (Arg)
2003	Cienciano (Per)
2004	Boca Juniors (Arg)
2005	Boca Juniors (Arg)
2006	Pachuca (Mex)
2007	Arsenal (Arg)
2008	Internacional (Bra)
2009	LDU Quito (Ecu)

LIBERTADORES CUP

Preliminary round draw

Alianza Lima (Per) v Jaguares (Mex)
Bolivar (Bol) v Union Espanola (Chl)
Cerro Porteno (Par) v Deportivo Petare (Ven)
Corinthians (Bra) v Deportes Tolima (Col)
Independiente (Arg) v Deportivo Quito (Ecu)
Liverpool (Uru) v Gremio (Bra)
1st legs - January 25-27; 2nd legs - February 1-3

Winners qualify for group stage

Group stage draw & schedule

Group 1

Libertad (Par)
Once Caldas (Col)
San Luis (Mex)
Universidad San Martin (Per)

Feb 15	San Luis v Libertad
Feb 16	Once Caldas v San Martin
Feb 22	Once Caldas v Libertad
	San Martin v San Luis
Mar 2	San Luis v Once Caldas
Mar 8	Libertad v San Martin
Mar 15	Once Caldas v San Luis
	San Martin v Libertad
Mar 22	Libertad v Once Caldas
	San Luis v San Martin
Apr 19	Libertad v San Luis
	San Martin v Once Caldas

Group 2

Atletico Junior (Col)
Leon (Per)
Oriente Petrolero (Bol)
Liverpool OR Gremio

Feb 16	*Liverpool/Gremio* v Oriente
Feb 17	Leon v Junior
Feb 23	Leon v Oriente
Feb 24	Junior v *Liverpool/Gremio*
Mar 3	*Liverpool/Gremio* v Leon
Mar 8	Oriente v Junior
Mar 15	Leon v *Liverpool/Gremio*
Mar 17	Junior v Oriente
Mar 24	Oriente v Leon
Apr 4	*Liverpool/Gremio* v Junior
Apr 14	Junior v Leon
	Oriente v *Liverpool/Gremio*

Group 3

America (Mex)
Argentinos Juniors (Arg)
Fluminense (Bra)
Nacional (Uru)

Feb 9	Fluminense v Argentinos
Feb 15	America v Nacional
Feb 23	Fluminense v Nacional
Feb 24	Argentinos v America
Mar 2	America v Fluminense
	Nacional v Argentinos
Mar 15	Argentinos v Nacional
Mar 23	Fluminense v America
Apr 6	America v Argentinos
	Nacional v Fluminense
Apr 20	Argentinos v Fluminense
	Nacional v America

Group 4

Caracas (Ven)
Universidad Catolica (Chl)
Velez Sarsfield (Arg)
Bolivar OR Union Espanola

Feb 15	Velez v Caracas
Feb 16	*Bolivar/Espanola* v Catolica
Mar 3	Caracas v *Bolivar/Espanola*
	Velez v Catolica
Mar 9	Catolica v Caracas
Mar 10	*Bolivar/Espanola* v Velez
Mar 22	Caracas v Catolica
Mar 24	Velez v *Bolivar/Espanola*
Apr 6	*Bolivar/Espanola* v Caracas
Apr 7	Catolica v Velez
Apr 14	Caracas v Velez
	Catolica v *Bolivar/Espanola*

Group 5

Colo Colo (Chl)
Deportivo Tachira (Ven)
Santos (Bra)
Cerro Porteno OR Deportivo Petare

Feb 15	Tachira v Santos
Feb 17	*Cerro Porteno/Petare* v Colo Colo
Mar 1	Tachira v Colo Colo
Mar 2	Santos v *Cerro Porteno/Petare*
Mar 10	*Cerro Porteno/Petare* v Tachira
Mar 16	Colo Colo v Santos
Apr 5	Tachira v *Cerro Porteno/Petare*
Apr 6	Santos v Colo Colo
Apr 12	Colo Colo v Tachira
Apr 13	*Cerro Porteno/Petare* v Santos
Apr 20	Colo Colo v *Cerro Porteno/Petare*
	Santos v Tachira

New start...Cappa

ARGENTINA

Velez joins *El Rojo*

Sudamericana Cup champions Independiente have made Colombian full-back Ivan Velez their first signing for the forthcoming clausura. The 26-year-old joins *El Rojo* on loan from Once Caldas for a year and the Argentinian club have an option to sign the international for £350,000.

Meanwhile, former Huracan and River Plate coach Angel Cappa has taken charge at Gimnasia La Plata. He replaces Diego Cocca, who resigned during the apertura.

BRAZIL

Old boy returns home

Former international winger Mancini has returned home, joining Atletico Mineiro from Internazionale for an undisclosed fee. The 30-year-old, who began his career with Mineiro, also played for Venezia, Roma and Milan in Italy.

URUGUAY

Solari says goodbye

Ex-Real Madrid, River Plate and Argentina midfielder Santiago Solari had his contract with Penarol terminated by mutual agreement after four months.

Group 6
Emelec (Ecu)
Internacional (Bra)
Jorge Wilstermann (Bol)
Alianza Lima OR Jaguares

Feb 16	*Alianza/Jaguares* v Wilstermann
	Emelec v Internacional
Feb 22	Emelec v Wilstermann
Feb 23	Internacional v *Alianza/Jaguares*
Mar 8	*Alianza/Jaguares* v Emelec
Mar 16	Emelec v *Alianza/Jaguares*
	Wilstermann v Internacional
Mar 30	Internacional v Wilstermann
Apr 6	*Alianza/Jaguares* v Internacional
	Wilstermann v Emelec
Apr 19	Internacional v Emelec
	Wilstermann v *Alianza/Jaguares*

Group 7
Cruzeiro (Bra)
Estudiantes de La Plata (Arg)
Guarani (Par)
Corinthians OR Deportes Tolima

Feb 9	*Corinthians/Tolima* v Guarani
Feb 16	Cruzeiro v Estudiantes
Feb 22	Cruzeiro v Guarani
Feb 23	Estudiantes v *Corinthians/Tolima*
Mar 2	*Corinthians/Tolima* v Cruzeiro
Mar 9	Guarani v Estudiantes
Mar 16	Cruzeiro v *Corinthians/Tolima*
Mar 17	Estudiantes v Guarani
Mar 30	*Corinthians/Tolima* v Estudiantes
Mar 31	Guarani v Cruzeiro
Apr 13	Estudiantes v Cruzeiro
	Guarani v *Corinthians/Tolima*

Group 8
Godoy Cruz (Arg)
LDU Quito (Ecu)
Penarol (Uru)
Independiente OR Deportivo Quito

Feb 17	Godoy Cruz v LDU
Feb 24	*Independiente/Dep Quito* v Penarol
Mar 1	Godoy Cruz v Penarol
Mar 3	LDU v *Independiente/Dep Quito*
Mar 9	Penarol v LDU
Mar 10	*Independiente/Dep Quito* v Godoy Cruz
Mar 17	LDU v Penarol
Mar 23	Godoy Cruz v *Independiente/Dep Quito*
Mar 31	Penarol v Godoy Cruz
Apr 5	*Independiente/Dep Quito* v LDU
Apr 12	LDU v Godoy Cruz
	Penarol v *Independiente/Dep Quito*

Top two in each group qualify for 1st knockout round

ARGENTINA

Apertura

Tuesday, December 7
Arsenal 2 (Mosca 39, Alustiza pen 68)
Colon 1 (Goux 49)

Gimnasia La Plata 3 (Sanchez og 2, Neira 62, Casas 85)
All Boys 1 (Barrientos 49)

Wednesday, December 8
Godoy Cruz 1 (Castillo 7)
Racing Club 1 (Pillud 42)

River Plate 0
Estudiantes 4 (Desabato 2, Sanchez 45, Rojo 47, Mercado 57)

Velez Sarsfield 2 (Cristaldo 52, 84)
Huracan 0

Thursday, December 9
Argentinos Juniors 1 (Blandi 44)
Lanus 2 (Castillejos 10, 16)

Banfield 0
Boca Juniors 0

Newell s Old Boys 0
Olimpo 1 (Villanueva 39)

Quilmes 1 (Morales 18)
San Lorenzo 0

Saturday, December 11
All Boys 2 (Perez Garcia 29, Matos pen 90+5)
Godoy Cruz 2 (Rojas 1, Donda 7)

Sunday, December 12
Colon 1 (Acosta 85)
Newell s Old Boys 0

Estudiantes 2 (Fernandez 75, Lopez 88)
Arsenal 0

Racing Club 0
Velez Sarsfield 2 (Martinez 24, Moralez 59)

San Lorenzo 2 (Bottinelli 48, Menseguez 85)
Banfield 1 (Erviti 38)

Monday, December 13
Boca Juniors 1 (Palermo 5)
Gimnasia La Plata 1 (Neira 76)

Huracan 1 (Roffes 47)
Independiente 0

Lanus 1 (Romero pen 32)
River Plate 4 (Lamela 29, Roman 52, Pavone pen 54, 76)

Olimpo 0
Quilmes 1 (Gerlo 3)

Tigre 1 (Stracqualursi pen 45)
Argentinos Juniors 1 (Rius 63)

ARGENTINA A PERTURA FINAL*

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Estudiantes	19	14	3	2	32	8	45
Velez	19	13	4	2	33	9	43
Arsenal	19	9	5	5	22	19	32
River Plate	19	8	7	4	21	18	31
Godoy Cruz	19	7	8	4	32	25	29
Racing Club	19	8	5	6	25	18	29
Lanus	19	8	4	7	20	25	28
All Boys	19	7	5	7	24	23	26
Newell s	19	6	8	5	13	12	26
Colon	19	7	5	7	21	29	26
Boca Juniors	19	7	4	8	20	20	25
Argentinos	19	6	6	7	22	21	24
San Lorenzo	19	6	6	7	18	20	24
Tigre	18	6	4	8	23	24	22
Banfield	19	4	8	7	20	19	20
Quilmes	19	4	7	8	14	23	19
Olimpo	19	5	3	11	18	26	18
Huracan	19	4	4	11	16	33	16
Gimnasia LP	19	3	6	10	13	23	15
Independiente	18	2	8	8	13	25	14

No relegation after apertura
**Pending result of delayed Independiente v Tigre game*

LEADING GOALSCORERS
11 Santiago Silva (Velez Sarsfield)
10 Juan Manuel Martinez (Velez Sarsfield)
10 Denis Stracqualursi (Tigre)
8 Mauro Matos (All Boys)
8 Martin Palermo (Boca Juniors)
8 David Ramirez (Godoy Cruz)

BOLIVIA

Clausura

BOLIVIA C LAUSURA F INAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Oriente	22	12	4	6	38	26	40
Bolivar	22	10	6	6	37	28	36
Aurora	22	10	4	8	34	30	34
San Jose	22	10	4	8	39	37	34
Guabira	22	9	5	8	22	28	32
Blooming	22	9	4	9	28	26	31
Real Potosi	22	8	5	9	38	35	29
The Strongest*	22	10	2	10	37	36	29
Mamore**	22	7	7	8	21	30	28
La Paz	22	7	5	10	33	36	26
Wil mann (R)**	22	5	7	10	26	32	22
Universitario	22	5	7	10	24	33	22

**3pts deducted for fielding more than the maximum 3 foreign players in a game*
***Relegation based on average points over two most recent seasons. The team with the worst average, Wilstermann, were relegated automatically; the 2nd worst, Mamore, went into the relegation/promotion play-off, in which they beat Real America (runners-up in 2nd level) to stay up*

Promoted: Nacional Potosi

CHILE

CHILE F INAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Univ Catolica	34	23	5	6	77	39	74
Colo Colo	34	22	5	7	67	34	71
Audax Italiano	34	20	5	9	75	58	65
Univ Chile	34	20	4	10	75	48	64
Espanola	34	14	10	10	58	50	52
Huachipato	34	12	12	10	44	40	48
La Serena	34	13	6	15	45	59	45
Wanderers	34	12	9	13	48	52	45
San Felipe	34	12	7	15	38	47	43
Cobresal	34	12	6	16	47	52	42
Palestino	34	11	9	14	35	41	42
O Higgins	34	10	11	13	46	44	41
Nublense	34	9	13	12	54	66	40
Cobreloa	34	10	9	15	45	47	39
U Concepcion*	34	9	11	14	39	50	38
Morning*	34	9	9	16	34	45	36
Everton (R)	34	8	10	16	38	58	34
San Luis (R)	34	5	9	20	36	71	24

Promoted: Municipal Iquique, Union La Calera
**Univ Concepcion and Santiago Morning stayed up after beating Curico Unido (4th in 2nd level) and Antofagasta (3rd in 2nd level) respectively in the relegation/promotion play-offs*

COLOMBIA

Clausura r egular season

COLOMBIA C LAUSURA REGULAR F INAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Tolima	18	11	3	4	35	15	36
Once Caldas	18	11	3	4	34	26	36
Ind Santa Fe	18	10	5	3	26	13	35
Nacional	18	10	3	5	25	23	33
Quindio	18	9	4	5	25	20	31
Huila	18	8	6	4	28	24	30
Cucuta	18	8	4	6	24	18	28
La Equidad	18	8	4	6	23	23	28
Dep Cali	18	6	8	4	31	23	26
America	18	7	4	7	25	23	25
Ind Medellin	18	5	9	4	22	22	24
Millonarios	18	6	4	8	25	25	22
Chico	18	5	6	7	16	26	21
Junior	18	2	10	6	21	28	16
Cartagena	18	3	6	9	17	29	15
Cortulua (R)*	18	3	4	11	14	30	13
Pereira	18	0	9	9	12	22	9
Envigado*	18	1	6	11	19	32	9

Top 8 entered championship play-off groups
**Relegation based on average points over three most recent seasons. The team with the worst average, Cortulua, were relegated automatically; the 2nd worst, Envigado, went into the relegation/promotion play-off, in which they beat Deportivo Pasto (runners-up in 2nd level) to stay up*

Promoted: Itagui

Clausura pla y-offs

Group A
Dec 8: Tolima 4 Huila 3; La Equidad 0 Indep Santa Fe 1.
Dec 12: Indep Santa Fe 0 Tolima 1; Huila 2 La Equidad 1.

CLAUSURA PLAY-OFFS GR OUP A F INAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Tolima	6	3	2	1	11	9	11
Ind Santa Fe	6	3	1	2	8	6	10
Huila	6	2	1	3	9	10	7
La Equidad	6	1	2	3	4	7	5

Group B
Dec 8: Nacional 1 Cucuta 1; Once Caldas 4 Quindio 1.
Dec 12: Cucuta 2 Once Caldas 1; Quindio 1 Nacional 2.

CLAUSURA PLAY-OFFS GR OUP B F INAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Once Caldas	6	4	1	1	14	7	13
Cucuta	6	2	3	1	7	6	9
Quindio	6	2	0	4	7	12	6
Nacional	6	1	2	3	9	12	5

Group winners qualified for Final

Final, 1st leg
Dec 15
Tolima 2 (Henriquez og 35, Marangoni pen 47)
Once Caldas 1 (Moreno pen 6)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 28,000. **Ref:** Ruiz
Sent off: Arias (Once Caldas) 73min

Final, 2nd leg
Dec 19
Once Caldas 3 (Castrillon 45, Uribe 53, Mena 75)
Tolima 1 (Aguilar 87)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Roldan
Once Caldas 4-3 on agg
Sent off: Vallejo (Tolima) 90min

Off again...Solari

GUATEMALA

Penalty showdown

Comunicaciones won their 23rd national title, beating Municipal 4-3 on penalties to win the apertura play-off Final.

MEXICO

Experiment on hold

The Mexican Football Federation have postponed plans to use two additional assistant referees in the domestic championship until next autumn's apertura.

The experiment was due to start with the second half of the 2010-2011 season – the clausura – in January.

PANAMA

First goal is decisive

Marchos Sancez's first goal of the season was enough to give Tauro a 1-0 victory over San Francisco and win the apertura play-off Final.

ALGERIA

North Africa champs

Entente Setif beat Al Nasr Benghazi of Libya 6-3 on aggregate to win the North Africa Cup-winners Cup.

The tournament is for the winners of the domestic cup competitions in Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia.

Winner...Comunicaciones' Rafael Morales

ECUADOR

Overall championship final

(1st stage winners, Emelec v 2nd stage winners, LDU Quito)

1st leg

Dec 5
LDU Quito 2 (Bolanos 51, 90+2)
Emelec 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 27,506. **Ref:** Alarcon

2nd leg

Dec 12
Emelec 1 (Quiroz 60)
LDU Quito 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 23,112. **Ref:** Vera
LDU 2-1 on agg
Sent off: Cevallos 90+1min, Bolanos 90+4min (both LDU)

PERU

2nd stage

Final, 1st leg

Dec 8
Leon 1 (Zegarra 51)
San Martin 1 (Alemmano 90+3)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 18,090. **Ref:** Garay
Sent off: Ronaille Calheira 35min, Rodas 43min (both Leon); Ramos 35min, Arriola 43min (both San Martin)

Final, 2nd leg

Dec 12
San Martin 2 (Garcia 15, Vitti 24)
Leon 1 (Perea pen 29)
HT: 2-1. **Att:** 35,768. **Ref:** Rivera
San Martin 3-2 on agg

VENEZUELA

Apertura

Dec 12: El Vigia 2 Monagas 1; Zamora 0 Caracas 3; Aragua 3 Estudiantes 1; Zulia 4 Caroni 0; Esppor 2 Yaracuyanos 0; Petare 0 Tachira 0; Lara 3 Venezuela 2; Mineros 1 Carabobo 1; Anzoategui 3 Trujillanos 3.

VENEZUELA A PERTURA FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Tachira	17	10	6	1	31	11	36
Esppor	17	11	3	3	30	11	36
Caracas	17	11	2	4	24	15	35
Petare	17	9	6	2	25	17	33
Trujillanos	17	7	6	4	22	15	27
Aragua	17	8	3	6	22	20	27
Anzoategui	17	7	5	5	35	30	26
Yaracuyanos	17	6	8	3	20	17	26
Estudiantes	17	6	4	7	18	22	22
Zulia	17	6	3	8	25	27	21
Mineros	17	4	8	5	20	20	20
Monagas	17	4	5	8	25	25	17
Lara	17	3	7	7	23	28	16
Carabobo	17	3	7	7	15	21	16
Venezuela	17	4	4	9	22	33	16
El Vigia	17	2	8	7	18	25	14
Zamora	17	3	5	9	17	30	14
Caroni	17	3	2	12	10	35	11

No relegation after apertura

CONCACAF

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Quarter-finals draw

Columbus Crew (USA) v Real Salt Lake (USA)
Cruz Azul (Mex) v Santos Laguna (Mex)
Saprissa (CR) v Olimpia (Hnd)
Toluca (Mex) v Monterrey (Mex)
1st legs - February 22-24; 2nd legs - March 1-3

COSTA RICA

Apertura

Final, 1st leg

Dec 12
Herediano 0
Alajuelense 0
Ref: Quesada
Sent off: Acosta (Alajuelense) 86min

Final, 2nd leg

Dec 19
Alajuelense 1 (Gabas 89)
Herediano 1 (Nunez 45)
Aet. **HT:** 0-1. **90mins:** 1-1. **Ref:** Bejarano
Agg 1-1. Alajuelense 4-3 on pens

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC F INAL*	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Don Bosco	20	13	5	2	34	12	44
Domingo Savio	20	11	6	3	39	22	39
Jarabacoa	20	10	3	7	31	15	33
Pantoja	19	9	6	4	31	20	33
Barcelona	20	5	9	6	21	23	24
Bauger	19	6	5	8	19	18	23
San Cristobal	20	5	2	13	22	45	17
Univ O y M	20	1	2	17	11	53	5

**Remaining games of the 21-round season will not be played, as they have been deemed irrelevant*

EL SALVADOR

Apertura

Final

Dec 19
Isidro Metapan 0
Alianza 0
Aet. **Ref:** Aguilar
Isidro Metapan 4-3 on pens

GUATEMALA

Apertura

Final, 1st leg

Dec 16
Comunicaciones 1 (Arreola 19)
Municipal 1 (Ramirez 23)
HT: 1-1

Final, 2nd leg

Dec 19
Municipal 2 (Romero 57, Castillo 62)
Comunicaciones 2 (Fonseca 9, 85)
Aet. **HT:** 0-1. **90mins:** 2-2
Agg 3-3. Comunicaciones 4-3 on pens

HONDURAS

Apertura

Final, 1st leg

Dec 5
Olimpia 1 (Carlinhos Dias 7)
Real Espana 1 (Lobo 4)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Matute
Sent off: Hernandez (Olimpia) 90min; Colon (Real Espana) 90min

Final, 2nd leg

Dec 11
Real Espana 2 (Martinez 87, Caetano 111)
Olimpia 1 (Bruschi 71)
Aet. **HT:** 0-0. **90mins:** 1-1. **Ref:** Pineda
Real Espana 3-2 on agg
Sent off: J Garcia 78min, Guity 107min (both Olimpia)

PANAMA

Apertura

Final

Dec 17
San Francisco 0
Tauro 1 (Sanchez 45)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Rodriguez

AFRICA

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Preliminary round draw

APR (Rwa) v Club Africain (Tun)
AS FAN (Ngr) v JC Abidjan (IvC)
ASEC Abidjan (IvC) v Cansado (Mta)
ASPAC (Ben) v Mongomo (EqG)
Diaraf (Sen) v Ports Authority (Gam)
East End Lions (SLe) v Djoliba (Mli)
Elan Mitsoudje (Com) v Simba SC (Tan)
Fello Star (Gui) v ASFA Yennenga (BuF)
InterClube (Ang) v Township Rollers (Bot)
Mighty Barolle (Lbr) v Kano Pillars (Nga)
Motor Action (Zim) v CNaPS Sport (Mad)
Ocean View (Zan) v AS Vita (DRC)
Raja Casablanca (Mor) v Tourbillon (Chd)
Real Bangui (CAR) v Mouloudia (Alg)
Recreativo Caala (Ang) v Saint George (Eth)
Saint Michel (Con) v Enyimba (Nga)
SuperSport United (SAf) v Matlama (Les)
Ulinzi Stars (Ken) v Zamalek (Egy)
US Bitam (Gab) v Les Astres (Cam)
Vital O (Bdi) v Cotonsport (Cam)
Wydad Casablanca (Mor) v Aduana Stars (Gha)
Young Buffaloes (Swa) v St Michel Utd (Sey)
Zesco United (Zam) v Liga Muculmana (Moz)

1st legs - Jan 28-30; 2nd legs - Feb 11-13

Byes to next round:
Al Ahly (Egy), Al Hilal Omdurman (Sud), Al Ittihad (Lby), Al Merreikh (Sud), Dynamos (Zim), ES Setif (Alg), Esperance (Tun), Stade Malien (Mli), TP Mazembe (DRC; holders)

CONFEDERATION CUP

Preliminary round draw

AS Adema (Mad) v Maxaquene (Moz)
AS Aviacao (Ang) v Sofapaka (Ken)
CA Batna (Alg) v Al Nasr (Lby)
Centre Salif Keita (Mli) v Difaa El Jadida (Mor)
Diplomate (CAR) v Tiko United (Cam)
Dynamic Togolais (Tog) v Sahel (Ngr)
Foullah Edifice (Chd) v Ela Nguema (EqG)
Fovou Baham (Cam) v USFA (BuF)
Highlanders (Zim) v Nchanga Rangers (Zam)
KMKM (Zan) v Motema Pembe (DRC)
Leopard (Con) v Etincelles (Rwa)
Mbabane Highlanders (Swa) v Victors (Uga)
Missile (Gab) v Inter Star (Bdi)
Sequence (Gui) v Africa Sports (IvC)
Sewe Sport (IvC) v Ashanti Gold (Gha)
Sainte-Marienne (Reu) v Wits (SAf)
Tevragh Zeina (Mta) v Real Bamako (Mli)
Toure Kunda Footpro (Sen) v Ports Authority (SLe)
USS Krake (Ben) v Maghreb Fes (Mor)
Young Africans (Tan) v Dedebit (Eth)

1st legs - Jan 28-30; 2nd legs - Feb 11-13

Byes to next round:
Al Khartoum (Sud), Al Nil (Sud), Etoile Sahel (Tun), FUS Rabat (Mor), Haras Hedood (Egy), Ismaili (Egy), JS Kabylie (Alg), Kaduna United (Nga), Olympique Beja (Tun), Primeiro Agosto (Ang), St Eloi Lupopo (DRC), Sunshine Stars (Nga)

DR CONGO

DR CONGO: CHAMPIONSHIP PLAY-OFFS FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
AS Vita	6	3	3	0	9	2	12
TP Mazembe	6	3	3	0	7	3	12
St Eloi Lupopo	6	1	1	4	5	6	4
TC Elima	6	1	1	4	6	16	4

EGYPT

EGYPT	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Zamalek	14	9	4	1	28	17	31
Ismaili	14	8	2	4	24	17	26
ENPPI	14	8	2	4	22	15	26
Al Ahly	14	6	7	1	17	13	25
Al Shorta	14	6	5	3	15	9	23
Petrojet	14	6	4	4	17	14	22
Al Masry	14	5	5	4	16	12	20
Entag Harby	14	5	4	5	21	21	19
ML Makasa	14	4	5	5	19	18	17
Al Jaish	14	4	5	5	14	18	17
Haras Hedood	14	4	5	5	15	20	17
Al Gouna	14	3	5	6	8	12	14
Smouha	14	2	6	6	15	17	12
Mokawloon	14	2	5	7	12	20	11
Wadi Degla	14	3	2	9	16	26	11
Al Ittihad	14	2	4	8	18	28	10

Standings on January 4
30-round season (15x2); bottom 3 will be relegated

KENYA

KENYA F INAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Ulinzi Stars	30	16	11	3	37	16	59
Gor Mahia	30	15	11	4	33	15	56
Tusker	30	14	11	5	35	19	53
Sofapaka	30	11	14	5	39	23	47
Sony Sugar	30	11	8	11	26	26	41
Mathare Utd	30	7	18	5	31	28	39
Karuturi	30	9	11	10	22	24	38
Western Stima	30	9	11	10	28	31	38
Chemelil	30	7	13	10	22	26	34
Thika Utd	30	8	10	12	23	30	34
Nairobi C Stars	30	7	13	10	25	34	34
Leopards	30	8	10	12	29	41	34
Posta Rangers	30	7	12	11	28	37	33
KCB	30	9	6	15	29	40	33
Red Berets (R)	30	7	10	13	27	32	31
Mahakama (R)	30	5	11	14	21	33	26

Promoted: Bandari, Congo United

Derby clash...Al Ahly (in red) aagainst Zamalek

EGYPT

Big game goalless

Arch-rivals Al Ahly and Zamalek drew 0-0 at Cairo Stadium in the biggest club derby in African football. The result left Zamalek six points clear of the fourth-placed Ahly.

GHANA

New kids lead the way

Berekum Chelsea, the club named after the English side and formed barely a decade ago, are seven points clear at the top of the table at the halfway stage.

Traditional Ghanaian powerhouses Asante Kotoko and Hearts of Oak, who have won 41 league titles between them, are having their worst seasons for years, with Hearts currently in ninth place and Kotoko 12th in the 16-team competition.

NIGERIA

Sharks win WAFU Cup

Sharks, who are based in Port Harcourt, beat Casa Sport of Senegal 1-0 in the Final of the West Africa Football Union Club Cup in Lome, Togo, with Victor Ezeji scoring the only goal of the game.

Semassi of Togo beat Guinea's Horoya 6-5 on penalties in the third-place play-off match.

MADAGASCAR

MADAGASCAR: CHAMP SHIP PLAY-OFFS FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
CNaPS Sport	3	2	1	0	4	1	7
Acad Antsika	3	1	1	1	5	5	4
Japan Actuels	3	1	1	1	4	4	4
AS Adema	3	0	1	2	1	4	1

MAURITIUS

MAURITIUS FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Pamplemous	24	16	4	4	48	17	52
ASPL 2000	24	13	7	4	41	20	46
P Riviere Noire	24	11	7	6	53	29	40
ASVP	24	11	7	6	48	25	40
C Starlight	24	11	6	7	32	28	39
Savanne	24	11	5	8	31	33	38
CTNFB	24	10	5	9	43	37	35
PAS Mates	24	8	8	8	39	44	32
Entente BR	24	6	9	9	28	45	27
Faucon Flacq	24	6	6	12	23	34	24
Riviere R part	24	5	7	12	30	40	22
Etoile I Ouest	24	4	5	15	40	61	17
USBB/RH (R)	24	3	6	15	19	62	15

MOROCCO

MOROCCO	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Maghreb	15	7	6	2	19	11	27
Olympique K	15	7	5	3	16	9	26
Raja	15	7	4	4	20	13	25
Olympic Safi	15	6	7	2	13	9	25
JSM	15	6	4	5	16	19	22
Wydad C	14	5	6	3	11	9	21
Hassania	14	5	5	4	12	10	20
FAR	15	4	7	4	14	12	19
Difaa	15	3	8	4	12	12	17
Moghreb	14	4	5	5	11	12	17
FUS	12	3	7	2	9	8	16
Kawkab	15	2	9	4	9	10	15
Wydad Fes	15	3	6	6	10	16	15
Chabab	14	2	8	4	9	11	14
KAC	15	2	6	7	6	14	12
Kasba Tadla	14	1	5	8	8	20	8

Standings on January 4
30-round season (15x2); bottom 2 will be relegated

NIGERIA

NIGERIA	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Dolphins	9	6	0	3	9	4	18
Sunshine Stars	9	5	1	3	13	8	16
Kwara Utd	9	5	1	3	8	4	16
Gombe Utd	9	5	1	3	11	10	16
Enugu Rangers	9	5	0	4	16	10	15
Sharks	8	4	3	1	10	7	15
Warri Wolves	8	4	2	2	11	8	14
Heartland	9	4	2	3	9	8	14
Kano Pillars	8	4	1	3	11	7	13
Kaduna Utd	9	3	3	3	10	11	12
Enyimba	9	4	0	5	6	9	12
Lobi Stars	9	3	2	4	9	10	11
Bukola Babes	9	3	2	4	5	7	11
Shooting Stars	8	3	1	4	8	9	10
Crown	9	3	1	5	6	7	10
N Tornadoes	9	2	4	3	6	8	10
Zamfara Utd	9	2	3	4	10	18	9
Ocean Boys	8	2	2	4	8	11	8
JUTH	8	1	4	3	4	7	7
Plateau Utd	9	2	1	6	7	14	7

Standings on January 4
38-round season (19x2); bottom 4 will be relegated

REUNION

REUNION F INAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts*
S Tamponnaise	26	15	8	3	37	15	79
Ste-Marienne	26	13	9	4	32	15	74
Ste-Denis	26	13	6	7	37	25	71
Marsouins	26	12	8	6	37	23	70
Ste-Pauloise	26	9	11	6	29	24	64
Petite-Ile	26	11	5	10	26	29	64
Les Avirons	26	10	7	9	28	29	63
Ste-Louisienne	26	10	7	9	30	24	63
Ste-Pierroise	26	10	6	10	27	21	62
Excelsior	26	9	8	9	27	20	61
Jeanne Arc (R)	26	8	8	10	31	31	58
Riviere (R)	26	6	4	16	25	51	48
Gauloise (R)	26	4	4	18	20	50	42
Capricorne (R)	26	3	7	16	19	48	42

**4pts for a win, 2 for a draw, 1 for a loss*

SEYCHELLES

SEYCHELLES F INAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
St Michel Utd	21	17	3	1	52	11	54
La Passe	21	14	2	5	46	14	44
Anse Reunion	21	10	4	7	42	37	34
St Louis Suns	21	9	6	6	34	24	33
Lightstars	21	6	5	10	20	37	23
St Francis	21	5	6	10	16	39	21
N Dynamo	21	5	4	12	27	35	19
St Roch Utd (R)	21	2	2	17	23	63	8

SOUTH AFRICA

SOUTH AFRICA	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Mamelodi S	12	9	0	3	20	8	27
Kaizer Chiefs	12	7	2	3	15	7	23
Orlando P tes	12	6	4	2	15	9	22
Ajax CT	12	6	3	3	17	12	21
Bloemfontein	12	6	2	4	15	12	20
Golden Arrows	12	5	4	3	15	12	19
Santos	12	4	6	2	11	9	18
Vasco	12	4	4	4	16	15	16
Free State	12	4	4	4	8	10	16
Wits	12	4	3	5	18	16	15
AmaZulu	12	3	6	3	20	19	15
Platinum Stars	12	3	6	3	11	11	15
SuperSport	12	3	4	5	11	17	13
Maritzburg	12	2	4	6	12	20	10
Mpumalanga	12	1	2	9	9	25	5
Moroka S	12	0	4	8	7	18	4

Standings on January 4
30-round season (15x2); bottom team will be relegated; 2nd bottom will enter rel/prom play-offs

SUDAN

SUDAN F INAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Al Hilal O	26	23	1	2	70	13	70
Al Merreikh	26	22	1	3	65	19	67
Al Khartoum	26	10	10	6	33	31	40
Al Nil	26	11	6	9	36	32	39
Al Mourada	26	7	11	8	26	35	32
Jazeerat	26	8	7	11	28	30	31
Hay Al Arab	26	7	10	9	28	34	31
Al Hilal PS	26	7	9	10	23	24	30
Al Hilal K	26	8	6	12	19	32	30
Amal	26	7	7	12	28	34	28
Al Ahli K	26	6	9	11	28	46	27
Al Ittihad	26	7	5	14	14	34	26
Al Ahli WM	26	4	11	11	20	30	23
Al Merghani	26	6	5	15	23	47	23

ZIMBABWE

ZIMBABWE F INAL*	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Motor Action	30	20	6	4	52	18	66
Dynamos	30	20	6	4	43	13	66
Highlanders	30	17	6	7	32	20	57
Gunners	30	14	11	5	44	25	53
Hwange	30	14	8	8	43	33	50
CAPS United	30	13	9	8	41	28	48
Monomotapa	30	13	8	9	43	29	47
Shabanie	30	12	7	11	34	35	43
Kiglon Bird	30	8	13	9	29	30	37
Eagles	30	8	13	9	18	24	37
Shooting Stars	30	8	9	13	22	31	33
Black Mambas	30	7	8	15	30	35	29
Lengthens (R)	30	7	8	15	27	47	29
Douglas W (R)	29	4	8	17	15	46	20
Bantu (R)	30	3	9	18	12	37	18
Victoria (R)	29	4	5	20	25	59	17

**Pending result of delayed Victoria v Douglas Warriors game*

ASIA

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Preliminary stage draw

1st preliminary round*

Al Saad (Qat) v Al Ittihad (Syr)
Muangthong Utd (Tha) v Sriwijaya (Ins)
**Single-leg ties (Feb 12)*

Winners qualify for 2nd preliminary round; losers enter AFC Cup at group stage

2nd preliminary round*

Al Saad OR Al Ittihad v Dempo (Ind)
Muangthong Utd OR Sriwijaya v Al Ain (UAE)
**Single-leg ties (Feb 19)*

2nd preliminary round winners qualify for group stage; losers enter AFC Cup at group stage

Group stage draw & schedule

Group A

Al Gharafa (Qat)
Al Hilal (Sau)
Al Jazira (UAE)
Sepahan (Irn)

Mar 1	Al Hilal v Sepahan Al Jazira v Al Gharafa
Mar 15	Al Gharafa v Al Hilal Sepahan v Al Jazira
Apr 5	Al Hilal v Al Jazira Sepahan v Al Gharafa
Apr 20	Al Gharafa v Sepahan Al Jazira v Al Hilal
May 4	Al Gharafa v Al Jazira Sepahan v Al Hilal
May 11	Al Hilal v Al Gharafa Al Jazira v Sepahan

Group B

Al Nassr (Sau)
Esteghlal (Irn)
Pakhtakor (Uzb)
Al Saad OR Al Ittihad (Syr) OR Dempo

Mar 1	Esteghlal v *Saad/Ittihad/Dempo* Pakhtakor v Al Nassr
Mar 15	Al Nassr v Esteghlal *Saad/Ittihad/Dempo* v Pakhtakor
Apr 6	Esteghlal v Pakhtakor *Saad/Ittihad/Dempo* v Al Nassr
Apr 19	Al Nassr v *Saad/Ittihad/Dempo* Pakhtakor v Esteghlal
May 4	Al Nassr v Pakhtakor *Saad/Ittihad/Dempo* v Esteghlal
May 11	Esteghlal v Al Nassr Pakhtakor v *Saad/Ittihad/Dempo*

Group C

Al Ittihad (Sau)
Al Wahda (UAE)
Bunyodkor (Uzb)
Persepolis (Irn)

Mar 2	Al Ittihad v Persepolis Al Wahda v Bunyodkor
Mar 16	Bunyodkor v Al Ittihad Persepolis v Al Wahda
Apr 5	Al Wahda v Al Ittihad Bunyodkor v Persepolis
Apr 20	Al Ittihad v Al Wahda Persepolis v Bunyodkor
May 3	Bunyodkor v Al Wahda Persepolis v Al Ittihad
May 10	Al Ittihad v Bunyodkor Al Wahda v Persepolis

Group D

Al Rayyan (Qat)
Al Shabab (Sau)
Emirates (UAE)
Zob Ahan (Irn)

Mar 2	Al Rayyan v Al Shabab Zob Ahan v Emirates
Mar 16	Al Shabab v Zob Ahan Emirates v Al Rayyan
Apr 6	Al Rayyan v Zob Ahan Al Shabab v Emirates
Apr 19	Emirates v Al Shabab Zob Ahan v Al Rayyan
May 3	Al Shabab v Al Rayyan Emirates v Zob Ahan
May 10	Al Rayyan v Emirates Zob Ahan v Al Shabab

Group E

Gamba Osaka (Jap)
Jeju United (SKo)
Melbourne Victory (Aus)
Tianjin Teda (Chn)

Mar 1	Gamba v Melbourne Jeju v Tianjin
Mar 15	Melbourne v Jeju Tianjin v Gamba
Apr 5	Jeju v Gamba Tianjin v Melbourne
Apr 20	Gamba v Jeju Melbourne v Tianjin
May 4	Melbourne v Gamba Tianjin v Jeju
May 11	Gamba v Tianjin Jeju v Melbourne

Group F

Hangzhou Greentown (Chn)
Nagoya Grampus (Jap)
Seoul (SKo)
Muangthong Utd OR Sriwijaya OR Al Ain

Mar 1	Hangzhou v Nagoya *Muangthong/Sriwijaya/Ain* v Seoul
Mar 15	Nagoya v *Muangthong/Sriwijaya/Ain* Seoul v Hangzhou
Apr 6	Hangzhou v *Muangthong/Sriwijaya/Ain* Nagoya v Seoul
Apr 19	*Muangthong/Sriwijaya/Ain* v Hangzhou

ZIMBABWE

First time for Motor

Motor Action won their first Premier Soccer League title, beating Dynamos – who have won a record 12 post-independence championships – on goal difference.

Dynamos won their last six games of the season in a bid to overtake the long-standing leaders, but Motor Action wrapped up the title with a 3-1 victory over Lengthens. They will now meet fellow debutants Cnaps of Madagascar in the CAF Champions League preliminary round.

JAPAN

Antlers triumph

Kashima Antlers beat Shimizu S-Pulse in the Emperor's Cup and join Nagoya Grampus, Gamba Osaka and Cerezo Osaka in the Champions League.

Cup winners...Antlers

QATAR

Out on a high

Romanian coach Cosmin Olaroiu resigned after leading Al Sadd to victory in the Qatar Stars Cup, Yousef Ahmad scoring the only goal against Umm Salal in the Final.

Ahmad's goal gave Al Sadd their first title in the competition and meant he finished as the tournament's top scorer with nine goals.

	Seoul v Nagoya
May 4	Nagoya v Hangzhou
	Seoul v *Muangthong/Sriwijaya/Ain*
May 11	Hangzhou v Seoul
	Muangthong/Sriwijaya/Ain v Nagoya

Group G

Arema (Ins)
Cerezo Osaka (Jap)
Jeonbuk Motors (SKo)
Shandong Luneng (Chn)

Mar 2	Cerezo v Arema
	Jeonbuk v Shandong
Mar 16	Arema v Jeonbuk
	Shandong v Cerezo
Apr 5	Arema v Shandong
	Cerezo v Jeonbuk
Apr 20	Jeonbuk v Cerezo
	Shandong v Arema
May 3	Arema v Cerezo
	Shandong v Jeonbuk
May 10	Cerezo v Shandong
	Jeonbuk v Arema

Group H

Kashima Antlers (Jap)
Shanghai Shenhua (Chn)
Suwon Bluewings (SKo)
Sydney (Aus)

Mar 2	Shanghai v Kashima
	Sydney v Suwon
Mar 16	Kashima v Sydney
	Suwon v Shanghai
Apr 6	Suwon v Kashima
	Sydney v Shanghai
Apr 19	Kashima v Suwon
	Shanghai v Sydney
May 3	Kashima v Shanghai
	Suwon v Sydney
May 10	Shanghai v Suwon
	Sydney v Kashima

Top two in each group qualify for 1st knockout round

1st knockout round draw*

Group A winners v Group C runners-up (May 24)
Group B winners v Group D runners-up (May 25)
Group C winners v Group A runners-up (May 24)
Group D winners v Group B runners-up (May 25)
Group E winners v Group G runners-up (May 24)
Group F winners v Group H runners-up (May 25)
Group G winners v Group E runners-up (May 24)
Group H winners v Group F runners-up (May 25)
**Single-leg ties*

AFC CUP

Group stage draw

Group A

Al Ansar (Leb)
Al Tilal (Yem)
Nasaf (Uzb)
Al Saad (Qat) OR Al Ittihad (Syr) OR Dempo (Ind) (whichever one loses Champions League 2nd preliminary round tie)

Group B

Al Qadsia (Kuw)
Al Saqr (Yem)
Shurtan (Uzb)
Al Saad (Qat) OR Al Ittihad (Syr) (whichever one loses Champions League 1st preliminary round tie)

Group C

Al Faisaly (Jor)
Al Jaish (Syr)
Al Nasr (Kuw)
Duhok (Irq)

Group D

Al Suwaiq (Oma)
Al Talaba (Irq)
Al Wehdat (Jor)
Kuwait SC (Kuw)

Group E

Al Ahed (Leb)
Al Arouba (Oma)
Al Karamah (Syr)
Arbil (Irq)

Group F

Song Lam Nghe An (Vie)
TSW Pegasus (HK)
VB (Mdv)
Muangthong Utd (Tha) OR Sriwijaya (Ins) OR Al Ain (UAE) (whichever one loses Champions League 2nd preliminary round tie)

Group G

Hanoi T&T (Vie)
Tampines Rovers (Sin)
Victory SC (Mdv)
Muangthong Utd (Tha) OR Sriwijaya (Ins) (whichever one loses Champions League 1st preliminary round tie)

Group H

Chonburi (Tha)
East Bengal (Ind)
Persipura Jayapura (Ins)
South China (HK)

Matchdays:
March 1/2; March 15/16; April 12-14; April 20/26/27; May 3/4; May 10/11

Top two in each group qualify for 1st knockout round

AUSTRALIA

Regular season

Dec 8: Melbourne Heart 0 Newcastle 2.
Dec 10: Adelaide 2 North Queensland 0.
Dec 11: Melbourne Heart 1 Melbourne Victory 3; Gold Coast 2 Wellington 0.
Dec 12: Sydney 0 Brisbane 1; Perth 1 Central Coast 1.
Dec 15: Newcastle 2 Gold Coast 0; North Queensland 1 Sydney 0.
Dec 17: Adelaide 1 Melbourne Heart 2.
Dec 18: Wellington 4 Newcastle 0; Melbourne Victory 2 Perth 0; North Queensland 0 Brisbane 2.
Dec 22: Central Coast 1 North Queensland 0; Perth 4 Adelaide 2.
Dec 23: Sydney 0 Melbourne Heart 1.
Dec 26: Central Coast 2 Adelaide 0; Brisbane 2 Gold Coast 2.
Dec 27: Melbourne Victory 2 Newcastle 1; North Queensland 1 Wellington 1.
Dec 29: Adelaide 2 Sydney 0.
Dec 31: Central Coast 1 Melbourne Victory 2.
Jan 2: Melbourne Heart 2 North Queensland 0; Adelaide 0 Brisbane 1.
Jan 3: Newcastle 1 Sydney 2; Gold Coast 0 Perth 0.

AUSTRALIA REGULAR

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Brisbane	24	14	9	1	44	20	51
Adelaide	24	12	4	8	36	30	40
Central Coast	21	10	6	5	33	22	36
Gold Coast	21	9	8	4	27	18	35
Melbourne V	22	8	8	6	33	28	32
Melbourne H	24	8	6	10	24	33	30
Wellington	22	7	5	10	28	35	26
Newcastle	21	6	7	8	19	20	25
Sydney	23	5	6	12	23	34	21
Perth	23	5	6	12	23	38	21
N Queensland	23	4	7	12	24	36	19

30-round regular season (10x3) top 6 will enter championship play-offs. No relegation from this league

BHUTAN

BHUTAN FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Yeedzin	12	11	1	0	48	11	34
Drukpol	12	8	1	3	46	15	25
Transport Utd	12	8	1	3	33	19	25
Druk Star	12	7	1	4	38	20	22
Choden	12	3	0	9	17	39	9
Druk Athletic	12	2	1	9	15	56	7
Nangpa	12	0	1	11	14	51	1

JAPAN

EMPERORS CUP

Final

Jan 1 - Tokyo
Kashima Antlers 2 (Fellype Gabriel 26, Nozawa 77)
Shimizu S-Pulse 1 (Johnsen 59)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 41,348. **Ref:** Toma

KYRGYZSTAN

KYRGYZSTAN FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Neftchi	20	12	7	1	36	14	43
Dordoy	20	13	3	4	49	18	42
Abdish-Ata	20	11	6	3	63	21	39
Alga	20	6	4	10	26	33	22
Sher	20	4	3	13	19	58	15
Khimik	20	1	3	16	8	57	6

Alay withdrew

MALDIVES

MALDIVES FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
VB Sports	21	16	5	0	66	17	53
Victory	21	12	6	3	35	16	42
Maziya	21	10	8	3	35	17	38
New Radiant	21	11	3	7	44	31	36
Valencia	21	8	6	7	34	32	30
Vyansa	21	4	5	12	19	37	17
Thoddoo	21	4	0	17	16	60	12
All Youth	21	1	3	17	16	55	6

TAJIKISTAN

TAJIKISTAN FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Istiqlol	32	26	6	0	76	17	84
Regar-TadAZ	32	22	5	5	81	24	71
Vakhsh	32	16	8	8	42	27	56
Xayr	32	16	6	10	59	42	54
Energetik	32	12	4	16	41	44	40
CSKA	32	9	10	13	35	51	37
Khujand	32	8	8	16	42	58	32
Parvoz	32	6	6	20	35	71	24
Ravshan	32	1	3	28	18	95	6

OCEANIA

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Group A

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE GROUP A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Amicale (Van)	3	2	0	1	4	2	6
Lautoka (Fij)	2	2	0	0	3	1	6
Hekari (PNG)	2	1	0	1	5	2	3
Koloale (Sol)	3	0	0	3	1	8	0

Oct 23	Hekari v Amicale 1-2
	Koloale v Lautoka 1-2
Nov 13	Hekari v Koloale 4-0
	Lautoka v Amicale 1-0
Dec 4	Amicale v Koloale 2-0
Jan 15	Lautoka v Hekari
Feb 5	Amicale v Hekari
	Lautoka v Koloale
Feb 26	Amicale v Lautoka
	Koloale v Hekari
Mar 19	Hekari v Lautoka
	Koloale v Amicale

Group B

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE GROUP B

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Auckland (NZ)	3	1	2	0	5	2	5
Waitakere (NZ)	3	1	2	0	5	3	5
Magenta (NC)	3	1	1	1	2	4	4
Tefana (Tah)	3	0	1	2	2	5	1

Oct 23	Auckland v Magenta 3-0
Oct 24	Waitakere v Tefana 3-1
Nov 13	Magenta v Tefana 1-0
Nov 14	Waitakere v Auckland 1-1
Dec 3	Tefana v Auckland 1-1
Dec 4	Magenta v Waitakere 1-1
Feb 4	Tefana v Waitakere
Feb 5	Magenta v Auckland
Feb 25	Tefana v Magenta
Feb 26	Auckland v Waitakere
Mar 19	Auckland v Tefana
	Waitakere v Magenta

Group winners qualify for Final

FORTHCOMING FIXTURES

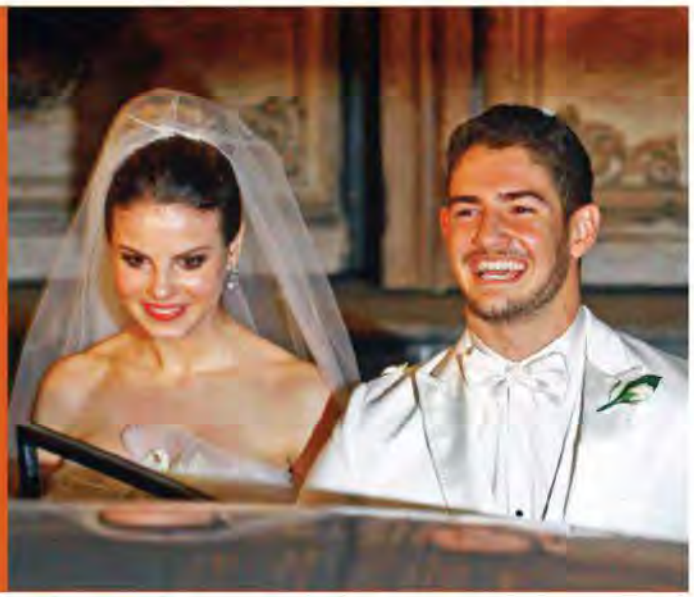
February 9
International friendlies; start of Libertadores Cup group games
February 15 and 16
UEFA Champions League round of 16, first leg
February 16
Libertadores Cup group games
February 17
Europa League round of 32, first leg
February 22 and 23
UEFA Champions League round of 16, first leg
February 22, 23 and 24
CONCACAF Champions League q-finals, first leg
February 23
Libertadores Cup group games
February 24
Europa League round of 32, second leg

Famous Last Words

Who said what and why

I sacrificed my career to marry him and I need to be compensated

After less than a year of wedded bliss, Sthefany Brito demands a divorce settlement of £50,000 a month from her ex-husband, Milan striker Alexandre Pato she cited his constant partying as the reason for the split



"If a champion like Eto'o can press and win the ball back, why can't he?"
Lazio boss Edy Reja informs star attacker Mauro Zarate that he either does his share of defensive duties or sits in the stand

"On hearing that Marseille were prepared to sell me to Chelsea, I could not believe it. When the reality sank in, I cried like a baby"
Didier Drogba may have only spent a single season at Marseille but his heart is still at the Stade Velodrome

"For sleeping with the wife of a team-mate"
The explanatory note found by police along with the dismembered body of ex-Guatemala international Carlos Mercedes Vasquez, the 27-year-old Malacateco midfielder who had been kidnapped by gunmen in broad daylight while he was out on a shopping trip with team-mates

Hero's return...Drogba

"This rotten banking system can only be destroyed by the banks themselves. It's a revolution without guns or blood"
Eric Cantona gets radical and makes an appeal for people all over the world to withdraw their money from banks on a certain day

"I'm not made for happiness. I don't know how to enjoy myself"
Rennes coach Frederic Antonetti goes in for a spot of self-analysis, in the process vindicating those who claim his team is boring

"Ancelotti is a very political man and coach. His hands were tied. By way of contrast, I don't think it would have been the same with Mourinho, who makes his own choices"
Lorient coach Christian Gourcuff gives his version of why his France international son, Yoann, was frozen out during his time at Milan

"I wasn't five times over the limit. I just had a few glasses"
Always ready to step out of line, Besiktas Spanish bad boy Guti crashes his car on leaving an Istanbul disco

"I put every member of the squad on an equal footing. Whether it be a Michael Ballack or a promising kid, I treat them all the same"
Bayer Leverkusen coach Jupp Heynckes reveals the secret of his success

"Barcelona are simply perfection at the moment. They have reached the summit. In the form they are in right now, they are unbeatable"
German *Bundestrainer* Joachim Low

Kop that...Liverpool fans yearn for Rafa Benitez

"The famous Anfield support has not really been there since I came here. I can only hope the fans become supporters as well because this is a time the club needs support"
Roy Hodgson risks the wrath of the Kop

"Hodgson for England"
Liverpool fans suggest a new job for the boss

NEXT MONTH MARCH ISSUE
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